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# Cavalry Operations and Their Effects on the Chancellorsville Campaign

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AD A029993

Final report 11 June 1976

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A Master of Military Art and Science thesis presented to the faculty of the  
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER <b>6</b>	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) <b>CAVALRY OPERATIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE CHANCELLORSVILLE CAMPAIGN,</b>		5. TYPE OF REPORT & DATES COVERED <b>9 Final Rept.</b>
7. AUTHOR(s) <b>SMITH, Charles R., MAJ, USMC</b>		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS <b>Student at the U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027</b>		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) <b>10 Charles / Smith</b>
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS <b>U. S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATSW-SE</b>		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS <b>11 Jun 76</b>
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE <b>12 139p</b>
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.</b>		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report)
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report) <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES <b>Master of Military Art and Science (MMAS) Thesis prepared at CGSC in partial fulfillment of the Masters Program requirements, U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027</b>		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)  <b>See Reverse</b>		

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The purpose of the study is to establish the effects of cavalry operations, both Federal and Confederate, on the Chancellorsville Campaign of the American Civil War. The primary source used for the study was the War of Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Confederate and Union Armies.

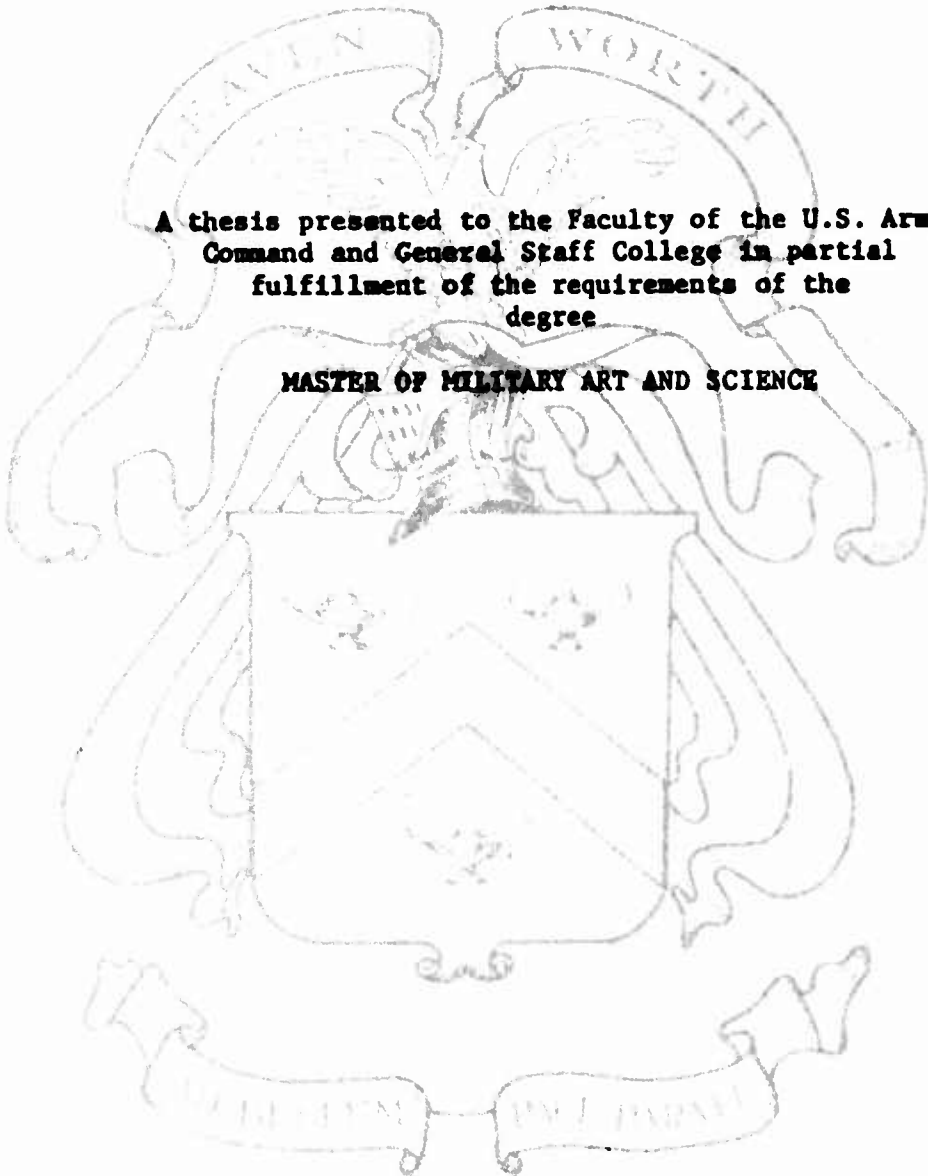
In analyzing the campaign, several factors emerge which help to explain Lee's victory and Hooker's defeat. One of these factors is the manner in which each commander employed his cavalry assets.

Among the major conclusions of the study are *as follows*:

- (1.) Federal cavalry operations produced no beneficial effects for the Army of the Potomac;
- (2.) The failure of Federal cavalry to produce significant results at Chancellorsville was due to the methods General Hooker used to employ his cavalry assets;
- (3.) The Federal defeat at Chancellorsville was due, in part, to lack of cavalry support on the main battlefield;
- (4.) Confederate cavalry was properly employed at Chancellorsville;
- (5.) The effectiveness of Confederate cavalry contributed significantly to Lee's victory.

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THE CHANCELLORSVILLE CAMPAIGN**



**A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
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fulfillment of the requirements of the  
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**MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE**

**by**

**CHARLES R. SMITH, JR., MAJOR, U.S. MARINE CORPS  
B.S., North Carolina State University, 1961**

**Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
1976**

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to establish the effects of cavalry operations, both Federal and Confederate, on the battles which occurred during the Chancellorsville Campaign. The primary source used for the study was the War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Confederate and Union Armies.

The Chancellorsville Campaign, fought by the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia, during the spring of 1863, was a major Federal offensive. Its purpose was to destroy the Army of Northern Virginia and to force it to retreat from Fredericksburg, Virginia. The campaign involved nearly 200,000 soldiers of both sides and produced over 30,000 casualties.

Ultimately, the Army of the Potomac, commanded by Major General Joseph Hooker was defeated by General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and as a result abandoned its offensive and retreated to its previous positions north of the Rappahannock River. The Federal Army possessed a large numerical advantage and though initially on the offensive it was forced to retreat by a smaller army.

In analyzing the campaign, several factors emerge which help to explain Lee's victory and Hooker's defeat. One of these factors is the way in which each commander utilized his cavalry assets. The hypothesis to be tested in the study is that Lee's employment of cavalry forces contributed to his victory, while Hooker's use of cavalry was a significant factor in producing his defeat.

Among the major conclusions of the study are:

1. Federal cavalry operations produced no beneficial effects for the Army of the Potomac.
2. The failure of Federal cavalry to produce significant results at Chancellorsville was due to the methods used by General Hooker to employ his cavalry resources.
3. The Federal defeat at Chancellorsville was due, in part, to the lack of adequate cavalry support on the main battlefield.
4. Confederate cavalry was properly employed at Chancellorsville.
5. The effectiveness of Confederate cavalry operations contributed significantly to Lee's victory.

The study is concluded with a review of the lessons regarding cavalry employment provided by the Chancellorsville Campaign and with some general thoughts on the use of cavalry forces on the modern battlefield.

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** All maps contained in this study are reproductions of maps appearing in Edward J. Stackpole's Chancellorsville, Lee's Greatest Battle. Map 12 has been annotated with information from John Bigelow, Jr., The Campaign of Chancellorsville, Map 2.

## INTRODUCTION

The genesis of this study is rooted in a long and persistent fascination with the American Civil War. This fascination is reinforced by a North Carolina birthplace and a strong sense of heritage and pride in the achievements of ancestors in Gray.

Though interest is rooted in the past, the true origins of this study flow from three more recent sources. It is useful here to set forth each of these sources with the view toward assisting the reader in understanding why the study was undertaken.

The first stimulus lies in the future. If America is again involved in armed conflict, two factors are stressed by the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College concerning the probable nature of that conflict: Americans are no longer likely to enjoy numerical nor technological superiority; nonetheless, it will be imperative to win the first battle. This stark reality is discomfoting, for Americans have seldom fought under these parameters.

The serious student of military arts is then drawn to the past for guidance and assistance. History is replete with many examples of inferior forces engaging a superior enemy and winning. Napoleon and Frederick the Great provide examples of the art. Closer to home the battles of R. E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia provide classic references which are easily researchable and provide voluminous records and documents for study.

With the theme of fighting and winning against a numerically and technologically superior foe in mind, the writer was drawn to the Civil War battle of Chancellorsville. A rather loose analogy is quickly seen between the situation facing General Lee in the spring of 1863 and that which may face an American commander on the contemporary battlefield. With these thoughts in mind, a review of the battle of Chancellorsville was commenced to determine first, how did Lee win; and conversely, how did Hooker lose.

This review led to the second of the three sources. Chancellorsville was primarily an infantry battle of major proportions. Yet, it is a rare case in which infantry fights alone. So what of cavalry, engineers, artillery, and logistics forces? Was the secret of Lee's success in his employment of the total force? In studying these aspects of the battle, the writer was struck by a passage from Douglas Southall Freeman's R. E. Lee: A Biography. The passage therein is germane to this study and indeed provided the impetus for additional research. Freeman states: "Little has been written, but much might be said of Lee's bold action in refusing to detach Stuart for pursuit of Stoneman's 10,000 cavalry."<sup>1</sup>

Could it be that cavalry employment produced or contributed to Lee's decisive victory at Chancellorsville, as well as Hooker's defeat? This is the essence of the problem that this study will attempt to define.

The third source appeared a short time later as a portion of a Command and General Staff College study assignment. This source was a reprint of an article by General James M. Gavin, USA, which appeared in

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<sup>1</sup>Douglas S. Freeman, R. E. Lee: A Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), III, p. 4.

Harper's Magazine in April 1954. In this article, General Gavin professed doubts as to the validity of current cavalry concepts and he closed his article by stating, "What we now need, as a nation, is an understanding of the past that can be converted into tactics and battle hardware, and give its soul back to the cavalry."<sup>2</sup>

The three sources listed previously provided the motivation for this study. Its purpose is to determine what, if any, relationship exists between the final results of the battle of Cancellorsville and the contrasting methods by which each side employed its cavalry units. The hypothesis to be explored is that the Confederate employment of cavalry forces decisively influenced the success of their infantry; while conversely, Union employment of cavalry produced a negative effect with regard to support of their infantry.

In order to establish this hypothesis, the study is divided into three distinct areas. Chapters I and II provide background information. Chapter III provides a review of cavalry actions. Chapter IV and Chapter V, interpretative in nature, relate cavalry actions to the broader infantry battle and establish conclusions which may be logically deduced from the analysis presented in Chapter IV.

Maps and tables, pertinent to the study, have been borrowed from various sources. They appear throughout the text and are acknowledged where they appear, or on page vi.

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<sup>2</sup>J. M. Gavin, "Cavalry, and I Don't Mean Horses," Harper's Magazine, April, 1954, pp. 54-60.

## Chapter I

### THE PRELUDE TO BATTLE

January 1863, marked the start of the nineteenth month of armed conflict during the American Civil War. The commencement of this new year was heralded on 1 January by the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, by President Abraham Lincoln. Hence the year began on a high note of idealism for the North, for this document was to win acclaim for the Union from abroad, while at the same time, detracting from the South's claim to legitimacy and thereby postponing her chance of winning much needed support from abroad.

On the field of battle, the North had wrested control of the border states of Kentucky and Tennessee from the South and was also solidly in control of the vital Mississippi River. In both the political arena and in the crucible of battle, the Union had achieved success in all areas except one, that being the eastern battlefields of northern Virginia. At most, the South had achieved a bloody stalemate on this crucial front. Here, the South had achieved its military objective, which was simply the defense of its heartland and capitol.<sup>1</sup> In this theater the North then had failed to date to achieve its objective, which was the conquest of the Rebel Army.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Bigelow, Jr., The Campaign of Chancellorsville: A Strategic and Tactical Study (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1910), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

The events of early January, 1863 continued to bode ill for the Union Army of the Potomac in this theater. Under Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, the Union suffered a bloody and decisive repulse during frontal attacks on Confederate positions at Fredericksburg, Virginia. Following this defeat, the Army of the Potomac withdrew to Falmouth on the north side of the Rappahannock River on 15 January 1863. Subsequently, Burnside made one further futile attempt to attack R. E. Lee's positions. On this occasion the attack was to move via Banks Ford in an attempt to flank the strong Confederate positions at Fredericksburg. The "Mud March," as this attempted offensive was dubbed, also ended in futility, since heavy rains rendered the dirt roads useless and made effective movement impossible.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note, at this point, that battles between these two Armies to date were all marked by success for the side which assumed the defensive.<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless, the terrible slaughter at Fredericksburg and the "Mud March" produced a politically untenable position for General Burnside. He relinquished command and on January 25, 1863, Major General Joseph Hooker was given command of the Army of the Potomac. A later portion of this chapter will discuss, in some detail, the character and qualifications of General Hooker. For now, it is sufficient to note that this appointment was made by President Lincoln against the advice of Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton and General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck, both of

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<sup>3</sup>J. E. Gough, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville: A Study of the Federal Operations (London: Hughs Rees, Ltd., 1913), p. 119.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

whom opposed Hooker's appointment.<sup>5</sup> The appointment apparently stemmed from the belief among members of Lincoln's Cabinet that Hooker was first, a fighter; and second, that he was the only eligible general who harbored no political ambitions.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the doubts concerning his appointment, Hooker assumed command and immediately commenced a sweeping series of changes designed to bolster sagging Union morale and increase the combat proficiency of his army. The most salient changes which Hooker devised were: the abolishment of the Grand Division System in favor of more and smaller corps; the consolidation of all army cavalry units into one large cavalry corps; the establishment of a Military Intelligence Agency; and the inauguration of a furlough system designed to stem the tide of desertions, estimated at two hundred per day.

Administratively, General Hooker displayed a talent for which he had not as yet been recognized. His programs were, in general, successful. Morale improved and the army appeared to be confident and ready for future battles. President Lincoln reviewed the army on 6 April 1863 and was favorably impressed with the state of morale, if not with General Hooker's blatant overconfidence and pompous verbiage.<sup>7</sup>

In spite of his faulty attitudes, credit may indeed be justly laid to Hooker for the transformation of the Army of the Potomac. In two and a half months he had reorganized a defeated and shattered army and on

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<sup>5</sup>Edward J. Stackpole, Chancellorsville: Lee's Greatest Battle (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Company, 1958), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup>Walter H. Hebert, Fighting Joe Hooker (New York: The Bobbs Merrill Company, 1944), p. 183.

April 6, 1863 he stood at the head of a well-equipped, well-organized and confident army. Chart 1 indicates the organization and the commanders of the Army at this time. The total strength of the Army of the Potomac, by type unit was as presented below:

	Strength
Infantry	111,000
Cavalry	11,500
Artillery	8,000
Special Troops	3,000 (approx.)
	<hr/>
TOTAL	133,500

During the period January 25 to April 6, 1863, the Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by General Robert E. Lee, continued to man and reinforce their already strong positions south of the Rappahannock River in and around Fredericksburg. No major changes were made to the army's organization, except that separate artillery batteries were reorganized into artillery battalions of four batteries each.<sup>8</sup> The troops available to the army were essentially those veteran units which had participated in the Fredericksburg Campaign of December and January, less two divisions of James Longstreet's I Corps.

On 4 February 1863, the Union IX Corps was detached and ordered south to Fortress Monroe.<sup>9</sup> In response to this move, and with some pressure from President Jefferson Davis, General Lee detached both George E.

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<sup>8</sup>Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 47.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

Chart 1

## Army of the Potomac

Unit	Commanding General	Rank	Arrived on Chancellorsville Battlefield
ARMY	Joseph Hooker	MG	Apr 30 - night
First Corps	John F. Reynolds	MG	May 2 - 6:00 P.M.
1st Div.	Jas. S. Wadsworth	BG	May 3 - 3:00 A.M.
2nd Div.	John C. Robinson	BG	May 2 - 7:00 P.M.
3rd Div.	Abner Doubleday	MG	May 2 - 7:30 P.M.
Second Corps	Darius N. Couch	MG	Apr 30 - night
1st Div.	Winfield S. Hancock	MG	Apr 30 - night
2nd Div.	John Gibbon	BG	*
3rd Div.	Wm H. French	MG	Apr 30 - night
Third Corps	Daniel E. Sickles	MG	May 1 - A.M.
1st Div.	David B. Birney	BG	May 1 - A.M.
2nd Div.	Hiram G. Berry	MG	May 1 - A.M.
3rd Div.	Amiel W. Whipple	MG	May 1 - A.M.
Fifth Corps	George C. Meade	MG	Apr 30 - noon
1st Div.	Chas. Griffin	BG	Apr 30 - 11:00 A.M.
2nd Div.	George Sykes	MG	Apr 30 - 12:00 noon
3rd Div.	Andrew A. Humphreys	BG	Apr 30 - night
Sixth Corps	John Sedgwick	MG	*
1st Div.	Wm. T. H. Brooks	BG	*
2nd Div.	Albion P. Howe	BG	*
3rd Div.	John Newton	MG	*
Light Div.	Hiram Burnham	COL	*
Eleventh Corps	Oliver O. Howard	MG	Apr 30 - 2:00 P.M.
1st Div.	Charles Devens, Jr.	BG	Apr 30 - 2:00 P.M.
2nd Div.	Adolph von Steinwehr	BG	Apr 30 - 2:30 P.M.
3rd Div.	Carl Schurz	MG	Apr 30 - 3:00 P.M.
Twelfth Corps	Henry W. Slocum	MG	Apr 30 - 1:00 P.M.
1st Div.	Alpheus S. Williams	BG	Apr 30 - 1:00 P.M.
2nd Div.	John W. Geary	BG	Apr 30 - 1:30 P.M.
Cavalry Corps	George Stoneman	BG	(a)
1st Div.	Alfred Pleasonton	BG	Apr 30 - 10:30 A.M.
2nd Div.	William W. Averell	BG	(b)
3rd Div.	David McM. Gregg	BG	(a)
Reserve Brigade	John Buford	BG	(a)
Artillery	Henry J. Hunt	BG	Apr 30 - May 1

\*Remained at Fredericksburg

Chart 1 Source: Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 374.

Pickett's and John B. Hood's divisions to move south toward Suffolk, Virginia.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, these two divisions would not participate in the coming battle. Throughout the period 25 January to 6 April 1863, Confederate cavalry was active west of Fredericksburg and participated in the only combat produced during the period. On 6 April, General Lee then commanded the Army of Northern Virginia as configured in Chart 2.

And so the lines were drawn. In April 1863, as winter played its final act with freezing rains and snow, two great armies faced each other across the muddy Rappahannock in anticipation of the nearing battle. The organizational charts reflect the relative strengths of the combatants. They show that the Union possessed better than a 2 to 1 ratio in infantry and approximately the same superiority in cannon. With respect to cavalry troops, the ratio was better than 5 to 1 in favor of the Federals. As this analysis of relative power indicates, the Union forces were clearly superior in every category. They also possessed the advantage of shorter and more easily defensible lines of supply and communication.

To best appreciate the armies, one must also possess some understanding of their leaders. For the purpose of this study only the Army Commanders and their primary cavalry commanders will be discussed. This is not to imply that other lesser commanders did not stamp their personalities upon the battle, for certainly some did, but they are not particularly significant to the study.

With regard to General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, little can be said which would not be repetitious in extolling the virtues of this remarkable man. Assuming command in June

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

Chart 2  
Army of Northern Virginia

Unit	Commanding General	Rank	Arrived on Chancellorsville Battlefield
ARMY	Robert E. Lee	GEN	May 1 - afternoon
First Corps	James Longstreet	LTG	Not present
McLaw's Div.	Lafayette McLaws	MG	May 1 - 6:00 A.M.
Anderson's Div.	Richard H. Anderson	MG	April 29
Art. Reserve	E. P. Alexander	COL	May 1
Second Corps	Thos. J. Jackson	LTG	May 1 - 8:00 A.M.
Light Div.	Ambrose P. Hill	MG	May 1 - 8:00-10:00 A.M.
D. H. Hill's Div.	Robert E. Rodes	BG	May 1 - 8:00-10:00 A.M.
Early's Div.	Jubal A. Early	MG	*
Trimble's Div.	R. E. Colston	BG	May 1 - 8:00-10:00 A.M.
Art. Reserve	S. Crutchfield	COL	May 1 - 8:00-10:00 A.M.
Reserve Art.	Wm. H. Pendleton	BG	May 1
Cavalry Div.	James E. B. Stuart	MG	April 30
Second Brig.	Fitzhugh Lee	BG	April 30
Third Brig.	W. H. F. Lee	BG	**
Horse Art.	R. F. Beckham	MAJ	April 30

Strength

Approximately . . . . . 61,000  
170 guns

\*Remained at Fredericksburg  
\*\*Remained near Gordonsville

Chart 2 Source: Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 375.

of 1862, he had gained a rapid succession of victories. He had defeated or checked the best the Army of the Potomac had to offer. George B. McClellan was forced from the Peninsula. John Pope was soundly defeated. Maryland felt his might, though Antietam was a standoff. Burnside was thoroughly trounced at Fredericksburg and as a result, Lee was a bonifide hero to his countrymen and the fly in the Union ointment. Edward Stackpole catches Lee's character quite eloquently in the following statement:

. . . The great Virginian was an outstanding example of a perfectly balanced human being. In 1863, at the age of 54, he had probably reached but not passed the peak of his powers. His erect carriage, broad shoulders, muscular physique and handsome features made him a striking figure afoot or on horseback. A man of deep religious faith and broad human understanding, his kindly manner towards officers and men, regardless of rank or degree of importance, reflected a sincere interest in their welfare and evoked an affection and loyalty such as few great leaders have been able to inspire or deserve. . . .<sup>11</sup>

His character and moral fiber were impeccable and this student has found no author who casts dispersions on this facet of Lee's character.

With regard to Lee's tactical ability, Stackpole again states it well:

. . . The crimson thread which stands out strikingly in the woven fabric of any appraisal of Lee's leadership is unquestionably that one which denotes superior intellect. This was clearly demonstrated in all his planning (except possibly in the area of supply planning), in his decisiveness and above all in his analysis of military intelligence. He was especially adept in divining the most probable line of action of his opponents and in devising counter-moves best calculated to nulify those actions. . . .<sup>12</sup>

In this writer's opinion, if any criticism can be levied against General Lee, in a military sense, it might be that he lacked the total ruthlessness to seek and attain the total annihilation of a defeated foe

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<sup>11</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 82-83.

and to deal with balky subordinates. In any event, history has accorded him a high place among the greatest combat leaders of all times.

With Lee's counterpart at Chancellorsville, history has not been as kind. Joseph Hooker was not cut from the same moral cloth as R. E. Lee. This fact, in itself, did not win or lose the battle, but some insight into his character may lend appreciation toward understanding his performance at Chancellorsville.

Hooker was a West Point graduate, class of 1837. His early combat experience included the Seminole War and the Mexican War, during which he received three brevets. He resigned his commission in 1853, after incurring the wrath of General Winfield Scott.

Following his resignation, Hooker settled in California and during this time managed to alienate then Colonel Henry W. Halleck who would later become the General-in-Chief of Federal armies. In 1861 he again offered his services to the Union cause and was ignored by the War Department. As a result of these snubs, Hooker traveled east to plead his case in person. Soon after the first battle of Manassas, he was granted an interview with President Lincoln, and he is quoted as having said:

. . . Mr. President, I am not Captain Hooker, but was once Lt. Col. Hooker of the regular Army. I was lately a farmer in California, but since the Rebellion broke out, I have been trying to get into service and I find that I am not wanted. I am about to return home, but before going I was anxious to pay my respects to you and to express my wishes for your personal welfare and success in quelling this rebellion. And, I want to speak one word more, I was at Bull Run the other day, Mr. President, and it is no vanity in me to say that I am a d----- sight better general than any you had on that field. . . .<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 5.

Shortly after this meeting, Hooker was, oddly enough, commissioned a Brigadier General of Volunteers with a date of rank of 17 May 1861.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, he served as a division commander on the Peninsula, as a corps commander at Antietam and as the commander of the Center Grand Division during the Fredericksburg Campaign. During the fighting on the Peninsula he acquired the sobriquet, "Fighting Joe." Hooker was not pleased with this quasi accolade because it apparently resulted from a misplaced hyphen in a news dispatch and not from his demonstrated proficiency as an aggressive army commander, though he had been an aggressive division commander. The article in question should have stated, still fighting - Joe Hooker . . . but in print appeared as fighting Joe Hooker.<sup>15</sup> So, like it or not, a myth was thus created. His fellow officers however did not ascribe a great deal of credence to his nickname, due primarily to his actions after receiving a minor wound at Antietam.<sup>16</sup>

Notwithstanding this strange background, Hooker was nonetheless appointed to command for reasons previously stated. His two primary weaknesses of character are generally described as an affinity for strong drink and the nasty habit of second-guessing his superiors.<sup>17</sup> In all fairness to Hooker, no evidence can be found that alcohol clouded his reason at Chancellorsville, though some believe he lost his courage without his whiskey. As regards his second flaw, there were no superiors to criticize at Chancellorsville, however, his official testimony following the battle is full of criticism for his subordinates.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 8.

The commanders then provide an interesting contrast in career development, ego and personal habits. Lee, quiet, religious and successful, was a proven combat leader. Hooker on the other hand, loud, swaggering and profane was not a proven leader of a force the size of which he was selected to lead.

The principal cavalry leaders also provide an interesting contrast in experience and their grasp of cavalry tactics. Prior to Hooker's organizational changes in January, 1863, Union cavalry had been employed as single regiments and brigades in support of individual divisions and corps. The organizational changes placed all separate units into a single large corps under one commander. It was hoped that this change would serve to produce more effective use of cavalry. The Union cavalry operations to this point in the war had in fact been ineffective. This failure was due to piecemeal commitment, indifference, neglect and a general lack of understanding of cavalry employment techniques exhibited by senior infantry generals.<sup>18</sup>

Such was not the case on the south side of the Rappahannock, for General Lee not only realized the value of his cavalry, but he was also a master of effective cavalry employment, the result of which was of great benefit to the Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>19</sup>

Brigadier General George Stoneman was selected to command the new Union Cavalry Corps. His new command consisted of three divisions, commanded by Generals Alfred Pleasonton, William Averell and John Gregg, and a reserve brigade under Abraham Buford. General Stoneman was an experienced

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

cavalry officer, though his most recent experience had been as an infantry corps commander.<sup>20</sup> He was a West Point graduate, class of 1846. His combat experience included the Mexican War and the Indian Wars. He was generally regarded as being a reliable and responsible, if somewhat conservative, officer.

As the commander of the new corps, it now fell to Stoneman to develop in his command the self-assurance, discipline and toughness displayed by his counterparts across the river. This was no easy task for Union cavalry faced a number of serious internal pitfalls. As noted, many Union generals had little if any appreciation for the unique capabilities provided by the cavalry arm. For instance, General Winfield Scott strongly believed that cavalry would be useless against rifled cannon.<sup>21</sup> Initially the North possessed few riders, riding horses, or marksmen during the early years of the war.<sup>22</sup> The Union cavalry had thus been relegated to inconsequential missions and neglect. As a result, its combat efficiency and morale was low when compared to the hard riding and daring Confederate cavalry columns.<sup>23</sup>

Stoneman's initial efforts included attempts to bolster morale and aggressiveness and to provide meaningful training in riding and shooting. These efforts were severely hampered by General Hooker, who insisted that his fledgling corps be employed in a long and static line of picket positions covering, at times, more than 100 miles of front. Stoneman's task then was not a particularly envious one.

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<sup>20</sup> Mark M. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary (New York: David McKay Company, 1959), p. 801.

<sup>21</sup> Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 23.

General Stoneman's principal subordinates were also experienced cavalry officers and two of them would play prominent roles in the battle to come. Brigadier General William W. Averell, a West Pointer, class of 1855, commanded the 2nd Cavalry Division. He had experienced combat in the Indian Wars and had served throughout his career as a cavalry officer. Of Averell, it is of interest to note that he was relieved by Hooker following the battle of Chancellorsville and again by Philip H. Sheridan for lack of aggressiveness in late 1864.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, General Alfred Pleasonton may have been made of sterner stuff. He was also an academy graduate, class of 1844. He fought well in the Mexican War, the Seminole War and on the frontier during the Indian Wars. He was the commander of the 1st Cavalry Division. To Pleasonton was to fall the arduous task of providing direct cavalry support for the entire Army of the Potomac at Chancellorsville. His task was further compounded when he was left with only one brigade of his division. The remainder of his division would in fact accompany Stoneman on his forthcoming foray.<sup>25</sup> It is of interest to note that Pleasonton was selected to replace Stoneman as the cavalry corps commander on 22 May 1863, following the battle of Chancellorsville.<sup>26</sup>

It may be fairly concluded with regard to Union cavalry that the cream had not yet risen to the top. At a later date in the war, aggressive capable leaders such as Philip Sheridan, Elon Farnsworth, Ronald Mackenzie, and John Gregg would emerge, but unfortunately for the Federals

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<sup>24</sup> Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, p. 35.

<sup>25</sup> Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 145.

<sup>26</sup> Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, p. 656

they were not as yet on the field in positions of high command. The Union cavalry would then enjoy only two major advantages over their southern adversaries. One was a vast numerical superiority, the other was the possession of the Sharps Carbine and the Spencer Carbine both of which were superior to Confederate cavalry rifles.<sup>27</sup>

If the Northern cavalry was rich in men and weapons, the Southern cavalry was blessed with superb leadership, excellent horses and riders, and sure marksmen. The Confederate cavalry was also a veteran unit with high morale and total confidence in its own ability. In their supreme commander, R. E. Lee, they had a staunch ally, for he was appreciative of their daring and a master at employing cavalry to the best advantage of his army.

Major General J. E. B. Stuart, known to his West Point classmates as "Beauty," was the fiery commander of the Confederate cavalry division of the Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>28</sup> He has been described as the embodiment of a perfect cavalry leader of that time. Stuart was however somewhat of an enigma. He was flamboyant to extreme which appealed to his troops and he possessed in abundance, personal bravery, endurance, and ample good humor which further endeared him to his men. For all of this ~~image~~, he was in fact deeply religious and possessed a sincere piety; yet, he was also an exhibitionist and extremely vain, perhaps in part to hide his youth. Stuart was 30 years old at the time of the battle of Chancellorsville.

Since early January, Stuart's cavalry had been thinly spread over much of northern Virginia. This dispersion reduced his effective strength

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<sup>27</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup>Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, p. 813.

for the coming battle to the brigades of Fitzhugh Lee and W. H. F. Lee. His force present for the battle would number approximately 2,500 troops.<sup>29</sup> These forces were arrayed around the Army of Northern Virginia from Culpepper Court House in the west to Port Royal in the east.

One salient difference in the contrasting methods of Union and Confederate cavalry employment is worth highlighting at this point. Whereas the Federal cavalry was widely dispersed and tied to a static and cumbersome picket line, Southern cavalry was kept in mass by units and was free to roam in search of targets of opportunity. The bulk of Confederate cavalry was located generally near Culpepper Court House. This massed force presented a constant threat to the Union and kept them ever mindful of the possibility of operations north along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad.<sup>30</sup> Chapter III will further explore this contrast in initial employment.

As previously noted, the two Lees--Fitzhugh and W. H. F. ("Rooney") Lee--were Stuart's subordinate brigade commanders and both were destined to play major roles during the coming campaign. Fitzhugh Lee had participated in the Indian Wars after graduating from West Point. He was Stuart's favorite brigadier and much credit is his for the devastating effectiveness of early Confederate cavalry operations. Like Stuart, he was a young man, attaining the rank of major general in 1863 at the age of 28.<sup>31</sup> Rooney Lee, like his cousin Fitzhugh, also attained prominent rank at a tender age. He became a major general at age 27. He was the

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<sup>29</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 60.

<sup>30</sup>Gough, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, p. 133.

<sup>31</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 41.

second oldest of R. E. Lee's sons and was a graduate of Harvard University.<sup>32</sup>

The final section of this chapter is devoted to the battleground itself. As always, the terrain was to play an important role in the impending battle. Map 1 portrays the theater of operations. While Map 1 is sufficient to orient the reader with the general area, it is not sufficient in detail to depict the subtle nuances of terrain in the vicinity of the main battle area at Chancellorsville. Maps of significantly increased detail are included further in the study, as appropriate, to give the reader a better grasp of significant terrain features.

The unfolding battle and its associated cavalry actions were to occur in that area of northern Virginia bounded by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad in the northwest and the Virginia Central Railroad in the southeast. The major terrain features are the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers and their numerous fords. The most prominent terrain feature in the immediate battle area was a section of forest known as the Wilderness, which has been described as a veritable forest primeval.<sup>33</sup>

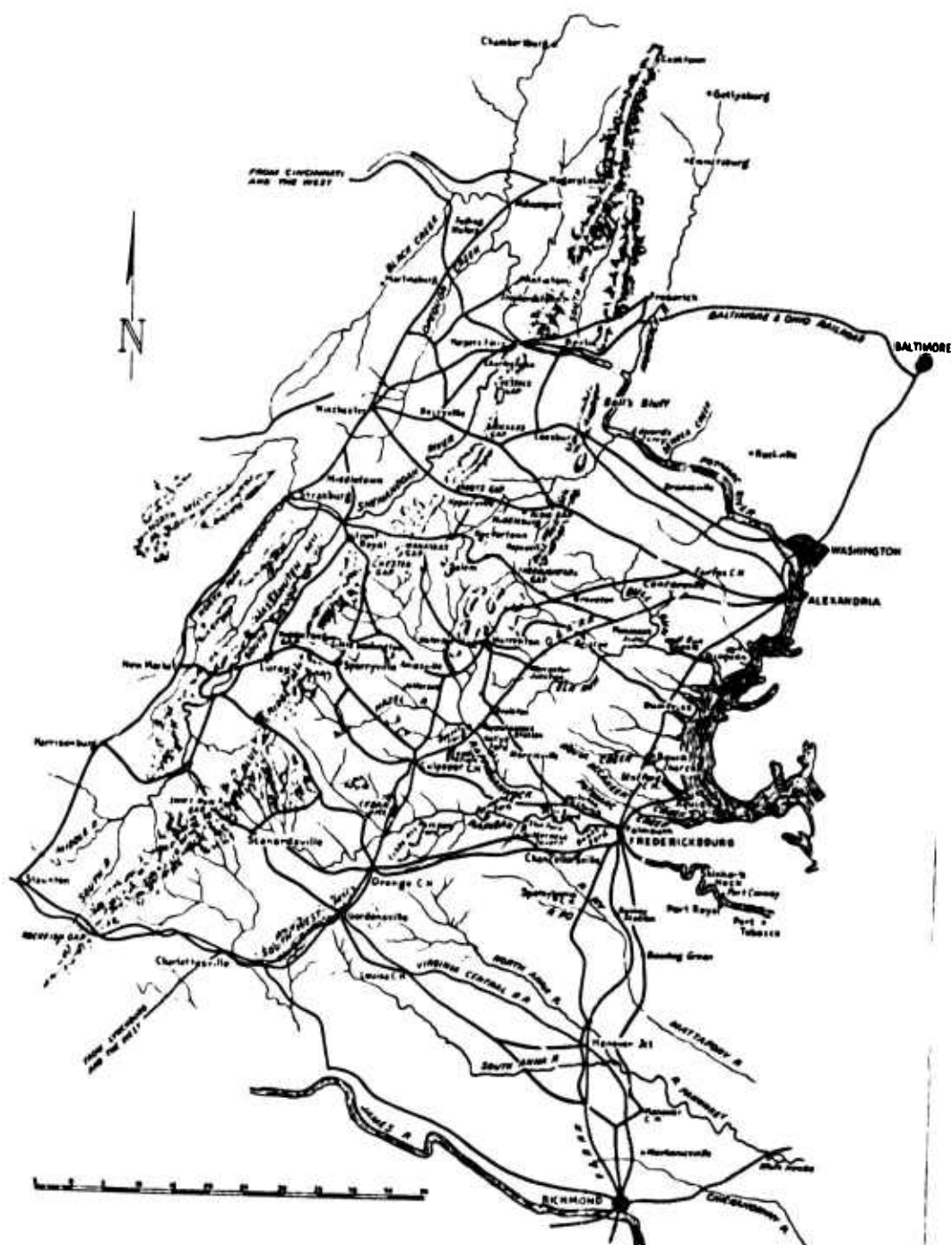
Brigadier General Gouverneur K. Warren, Chief of U.S. Army Topographical Engineers, described the area as characterized by a dense oak forest, interspersed with clearings. He forecast that cavalry and artillery operations would be limited and as regards artillery, fields of fire would have to be cleared in advance.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>33</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 98.

<sup>34</sup>Report of G. K. Warren, 12 May 1863, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Hereinafter cited as OR, prepared under direction of the Secretary of War, pursuant to Act of Congress approved, 16 June 1880 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1904), Series 1, Vol XXV, pt. 1, p. 193.



MAP I. THEATER OF OPERATIONS

The Wilderness is an apt name. Today, it is almost as impassible as in 1863. It is heavily forested with a thick, thorny underbrush, and has changed little if at all since 1863. There were two primary east-to-west roads. The Orange Turnpike ran from Orange Court House to Fredericksburg. The Orange Plank Road also ran east to west and coincided with the turnpike from Wilderness Church to Chancellorsville. The forest also contained numerous trails, logging roads, and wagon tracks. The most important of these were the Brock Road, the River Road, the Furnace Road, and the Catharpin Road. Additional maps will appear later to more clearly depict the significance of the trails and roads. For now, suffice it to say that in general the roads were important to the battle, for while it was possible for the infantry on foot to negotiate the Wilderness, wagons and horse drawn artillery could not penetrate the forest and were essentially road-bound.

As one moves east from Chancellorsville the forest becomes less dense, the ground less rolling, and there are more cleared and cultivated areas. Hence, the terrain becomes less restrictive to movement. It is in this area that logic should dictate that the battle would be fought, for it was conducive to combat predicated on the tactics of that era. However, as we will see, logic and reason are not always the rule of the day, for the primary battles in fact took place in the very midst of the Wilderness. In review then the rivers, their fords, and the vast Wilderness area covering more than 100 square miles were the terrain features of consequence during the battle of Chancellorsville.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 101.

The stage is thus set and the prelude to battle complete. Two veteran armies were prepared to batter each other once again. The Union Army, under a new commander, possessed both numerical and technological superiority. A new and daring battle plan had been devised and the army was brimming with newly found confidence and enthusiasm. In Hooker's view all that remained was to cross the river, turn the Confederate left flank, drive the rebels from their Fredericksburg positions and march on to Richmond. Across the river, Lee and his rangy army awaited the onslaught with their usual calm confidence. Soon now the armies would engage in deadly combat and again, as at Fredericksburg and Antietam, Union aspirations would falter and break on the rock that was Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

## Chapter II

### THE BATTLE

To assist the reader in understanding the role of cavalry at the battle of Chancellorsville, it is necessary to first review the major events of the battle. This chapter is provided solely as background and does not attempt to relate cavalry action to the battle. Cavalry employment and the advantages or disadvantages accrued will be discussed in Chapter III. The effects of the cavalry operations upon the broader fight will be developed in Chapter IV.

Major John Bigelow's, The Campaign of Chancellorsville, a most accurate and authoritative study, divides the battle into two periods. Bigelow considers the period 25 January 1863 to 26 April 1863 as a period of preparation and the time from 27 April 1863 to 6 May 1863 as the period of execution.<sup>1</sup> This phasing is accurate and this study will also address the battle in the same chronological frame of reference.

General Hooker's original plan called for the bulk of the Army of the Potomac to cross the Rappahannock east of Fredericksburg and attack General Lee's right flank. A feint, or support attack, was to be conducted simultaneously by minor portions of the army west of Fredericksburg near the United States Ford.<sup>2</sup>

Though under some pressure to get on with the war and produce a victory, Hooker continued to revise and refine his battle plans and on

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<sup>1</sup>Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. vii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

11 April 1863 he proposed yet another course of action and provided President Lincoln with the details of his new plan. The essence of the revised concept was that the newly formed cavalry corps under Stoneman would move on or about 13 April 1863 to cross the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers. Once across, Stoneman was to attack south, via Culpepper and Gordonsville to assume positions between Lee's Army and Richmond. His cavalry was then to destroy Lee's line of communication, the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad. If subsequently, Lee retreated, the cavalry was to block the retreat. After passage of the cavalry, the bulk of the Union Army was to cross the rivers west of Fredericksburg and assume positions to attack Lee's left flank and rear. The remainder of the army was to remain in Falmouth and threaten an assault on Fredericksburg.<sup>3</sup> The essence of this plan was then to drive Lee from his fortified positions in Fredericksburg and trap him between the Union Right and Left Wings while 10,000 cavalry harrassed his rear. On 12 April 1863, President Lincoln approved this plan and the initial movements were ready to begin.<sup>4</sup>

General Stoneman received a lengthy order on 12 April 1863 directing that the cavalry corps proceed on 12 April with the mission previously described. He was directed to proceed with all of his force except one brigade which was to remain with the Union Right Wing.<sup>5</sup>

The cavalry corps with Stoneman, approximately 10,000 strong, with 22 guns, 427 artillerymen, and 275 wagons, started their operation as scheduled.<sup>6</sup> However, due to numerous errors in planning and some

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<sup>3</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 2, pp. 199, 200.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>5</sup>Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, pp. 142, 143, 144.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

timidity on the part of Union commanders, the corps did not succeed in crossing the river before torrential rains turned the Rappahannock into a raging torrent.

General Hooker, unaware of the situation facing Stoneman, informed President Lincoln on 15 April, that the cavalry had crossed and was not greatly affected by the rain.<sup>7</sup> Later that morning he learned the true state of affairs and was forced to inform the President that the cavalry had not, in fact, crossed the rivers.<sup>8</sup> Upon receipt of this message, President Lincoln expressed grave doubts about the cavalry's chances of contributing to the operation in a worthwhile manner.<sup>9</sup> Thus the cavalry corps was to remain immobilized in the vicinity of Warrenton for nearly two weeks.

Dismayed at the performance of his cavalry corps, Hooker commenced immediately to revise the scheme of maneuver for the impending attack. His third and final plan did not change the concept of the operation, or its objectives. However, the infantry would replace the cavalry in leading the flanking movement to arrive in Lee's rear.<sup>10</sup>

By 28 April 1863, all changes to orders had been completed and the Army of the Potomac stood poised to execute the new plan. During the evening and early morning hours of 28-29 April, the V, XI, and XII Corps crossed the Rappahannock and moved south toward the Rapidan River Fords.

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<sup>7</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 2, p. 213.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 109.

These movements marked the beginning of the execution phase. They were preceded by elements of Pleasonton's cavalry brigade which had been fragmented, one regiment to each corps.<sup>11</sup> The XI and XII Corps were to march as rapidly as possible and take the bridges and ford at Germanna on the Rapidan. The V Corps was to occupy and prepare to cross the Rapidan at Ely's Ford. This grouping along with Stoneman's Corps, initially constituted the Union Right Wing, though Stoneman, once across the rivers, was to be detached to carry out his original mission.<sup>12</sup> The Union II Corps was to cross the Rappahannock at U.S. Ford and advance to join the remainder of the Right Wing.<sup>13</sup>

The Union Left Wing, consisting initially of the I, III, and VI Corps, was to make a demonstration in full force in front of Fredericksburg on the morning of 29 April.<sup>14</sup> This demonstration was devised to hold Lee's forces at Fredericksburg until the Right Wing had successfully crossed the rivers. Map 2 depicts the situation as it was at 9:00 P.M., 29 April 1863.

At dawn on 30 April, Hooker's plans had thus far proceeded without major disruption. His Right Wing had moved rapidly, crossing two major rivers without serious loss. In truth, the Army of Northern Virginia had been surprised by the speed of the movement and at this time the Union Right and Left Wings were only 15 to 20 miles apart with the Army of Northern Virginia in between.

As dawn broke on 30 April, the V Corps moved early from Ely's Ford to Chancellorsville. The XI and XII Corps, also early risers,

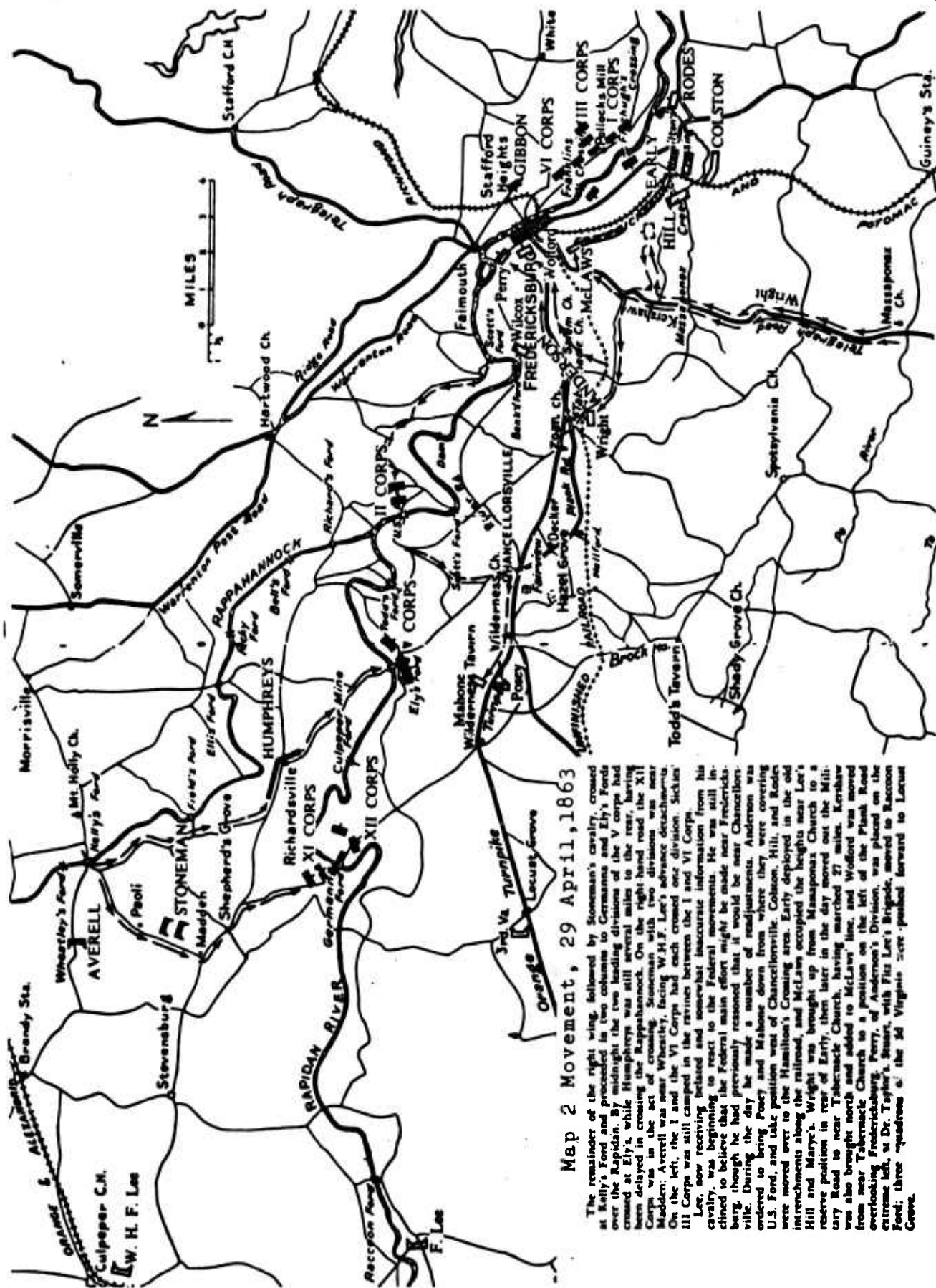
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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>12</sup>Gough, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, p. 172.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.



The remainder of the night wing, followed by Stoneman's cavalry, crossed at Kelly's Ford and proceeded in two columns to Germanna and Ely's Ford over the Rapidan. By midnight the two leading divisions of the V corps had crossed at Ely's, while Humphreys was still several miles to the rear, having been delayed in crossing the Rappahannock. On the right hand road the XII Corps was in the act of crossing. Stoneman with two divisions was near Madder's; Averett was near Whately, facing W.H.F. Lee's advance detachment. On the left, the I and the VI Corps had each crossed one division. Sickles III Corps was still camped in the rapids between the I and VI Corps. Lee, now receiving belated and somewhat inaccurate information from his cavalry, was beginning to react to the Federal movements. He was still inclined to believe that the Federal main effort might be made near Fredericksburg, though he had previously reasoned that it would be near Chancellorsville. During the day he made a number of readjustments. Anderson was ordered to bring Pomeroy and Mahone down from where they were covering U.S. Ford, and take position west of Chancellorsville. Colston, Hill, and Roden were moved over to the Hamilton's Crossing area. Early deployed in the old intrenchments along the railroad, and McLaws occupied the heights near Lee's Hill and Marye's. Wright was brought up from Manassas Church to a reserve position in rear of Early, then later in the day moved out the Military Road to near Tabernacle Church, having marched 27 miles. Kerns was also brought north and added to McLaws' line, and Woodford was moved from near Tabernacle Church to a position on the left of the Plank Road overlooking Fredericksburg. Perry, of Anderson's Division, was placed on the extreme left, as Dr. Taylor's Stuart, with Fitz Lee's Brigade, moved to Raccoon Ford; three squadrons of the 3d Virginia were pushed forward to Locust Grove.

moved from Germanna Ford toward Chancellorsville. By 2:00 P.M. on 30 April, the three Federal Corps, the V, XI, and XII, had arrived in the vicinity of Chancellorsville, virtually unopposed.<sup>15</sup> As on the 29th, all was progressing smoothly and according to plan. The Union Right and Left Wings were now only 11 to 12 miles apart and it appeared to the jubilant Union commanders that the Confederate Army must soon give battle or risk complete destruction in place.

On the Federal left, General Sedgwick with the I, III, and VI Corps continued to feint in front of Fredericksburg. At 11:30 A.M. on the 30th, Sedgwick reported to Hooker that the Confederate forces on his front had not moved and so, as ordered by Hooker, a full demonstration was not made at Fredericksburg.<sup>16</sup> In spite of his belief that the Confederate Army was still in full strength at Fredericksburg, Hooker directed Sedgwick to detach the III Corps and send it to join the Right Wing.<sup>17</sup> At 2:15 P.M. on the 30th he made yet another ominous decision. At this time, he issued orders that no advance was to be made east from Chancellorsville until all Union columns were consolidated.<sup>18</sup> This order dismayed Generals Henry W. Slocum, Oliver Otis Howard and George G. Meade who had advanced toward Banks Ford with little resistance. Nonetheless, orders were obeyed and the Union II, V, XI, and XII Corps assumed positions as shown on Map 3.

During the early evening of 30 April, Hooker joined his Right Wing at Chancellorsville and at this time issued his vainglorious General Order No. 47 which stated in part that:

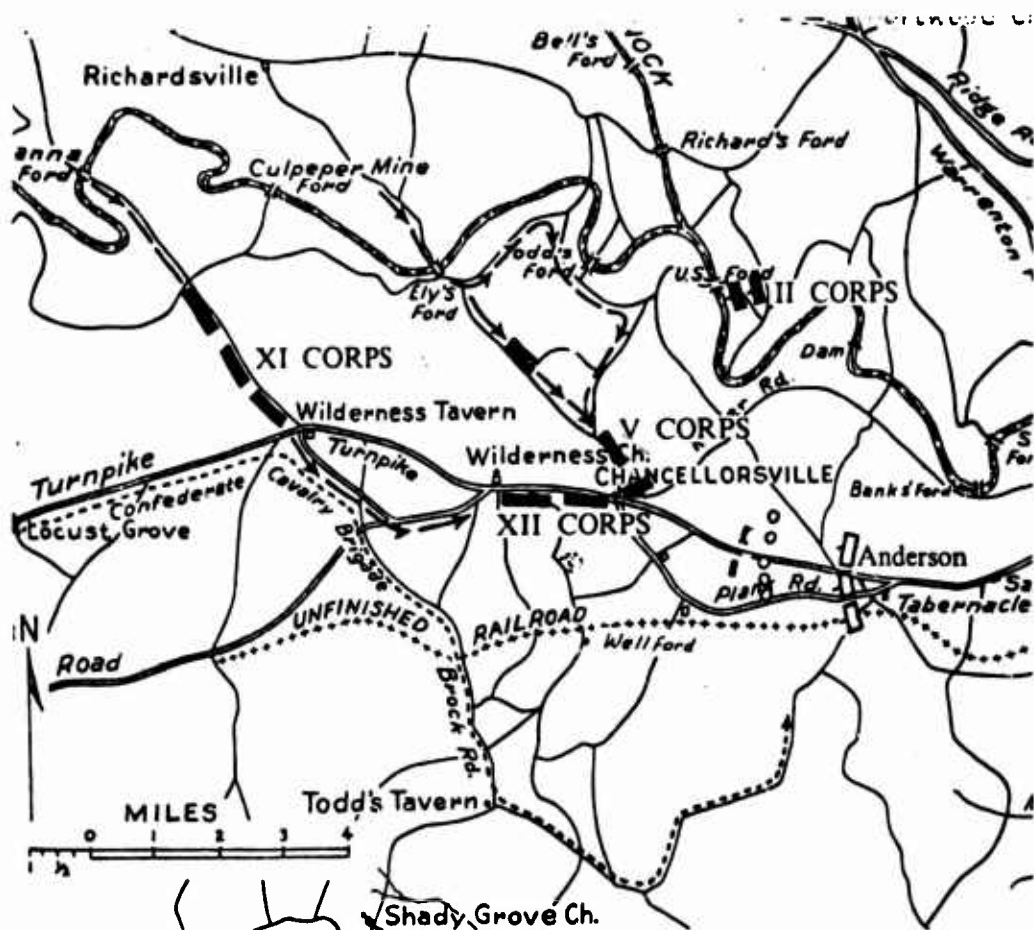
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<sup>15</sup>Gough, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, p. 189.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 2, p. 304.



Map 3 Movement 30 April, 1863

Meade's V Corps started the march from Ely's Ford at daylight, with Sykes' and Griffin's divisions, Sykes in the lead. Humphreys' division was still on the march between Kelly's Ford and Ely's. Almost at once Meade got word from the cavalry out in front that some of Anderson's division, thought to be a brigade, were covering U.S. Ford. Actually only a small detachment of Confederates remained in that area, but Meade diverted Sykes off toward U. S. Ford to clear up the situation, meanwhile continuing toward Chancellorsville with Griffin's division. He arrived there about 11 A.M., and recalled Sykes.

Slocum left Germanna Ford before 7 A.M. with his own XII Corps, followed at about an hour's march by Howard's XI Corps. As he passed Wilderness Tavern one of Slocum's flank units was attacked by Stuart who came up the Orange Turnpike from the southwest. The Federal infantry brushed this small cavalry force aside and continued on the Plank Road toward Chancellorsville. The head of the column arrived at 2 P.M., to be greeted by Meade, jubilant that Hooker had succeeded in maneuvering a powerful force to Lee's left and rear. Slocum threw cold water in Meade's face with the announcement that a fresh order just received from Hooker directed that they proceed no farther, but take up a defensive position.

Anderson has three brigades astride the Turnpike in the vicinity of Tabernacle Church; his covering forces are facing a Federal cavalry regiment and an infantry brigade across Mott Run.

. . . Army operations of the last three days have determined that our enemy must either ingloriously fly or come out from behind his entrenchments and give us battle on our own ground, where certain destruction awaits him. . . .<sup>19</sup>

For no apparent good reason, General Hooker had stopped the successful advance of his army just as it emerged on to open ground east of the Wilderness and from this position the superior Union artillery could have been extremely effective. He had failed to clear Bank's Ford, a strategic position which would have considerably shortened the lines of communication between his Left and Right Wings. Most ominous of all, the "ground of his own choosing" was located directly in the Wilderness area, not, as we have seen, conducive to offensive combat. These actions were, to say the least, astonishing for Hooker had overwhelming strength in position and had, in fact, achieved partial surprise. However, in spite of this success, Hooker was apparently content to wait. It was this delay which provided Lee with the time necessary to wrest the initiative from Hooker and the Army of Northern Virginia was not prone to let such an opportunity slip away.

During the Union movement around his left flank, General Lee had waited and watched to determine from which direction the main blow would fall. On 29 April 1863, he directed General Richard H. Anderson to withdraw two brigades from U.S. Mine Ford to Chancellorsville. During the morning of 30 April, these two brigades, under Carnot Posey and William Mahone, took up a position from Zoan Church to Tabernacle Church near the intersection of the Turnpike and the Plank Road. The brigades were faced west toward the Union advance. This position was strengthened

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<sup>19</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 146.

during the day for the purpose of holding Banks Ford, but as we have seen, no serious Union threat developed toward that location.

By late after noon 30 April, General Lee knew that:<sup>20</sup>

1. Hooker had divided his Army.
2. The location of major Union elements.
3. The objective of the Union Right Wing.
4. The approximate strength of the Union forces.

After digesting this news, Lee made a series of lightning decisions. The heart of his plan was to leave Jubal Early's division at Fredericksburg to deal with the threat from the Union Left Wing, now reduced to two corps under Sedgwick. General Lafayette McLaws was dispatched to reinforce General Anderson and General T. J. Jackson's Corps, less Early's division, was started toward Chancellorsville. Also orders were dispatched to General Stuart to have his cavalry division join Lee's main body, moving toward Chancellorsville.<sup>21</sup>

1 May 1863, saw a cool, clear dawn break over the Wilderness. It was ideal weather for offensive action, yet Hooker waited and time continued to slip irrevocably away for the Federals. Hooker had apparently decided to wait until General Daniel E. Sickles and the III Corps arrived at Chancellorsville before commencing further offensive action.<sup>22</sup> Sickles' 16,000 troops, added to those of the II, V, XI, and XII Corps, would raise Hooker's battle strength of the Right Wing to nearly 70,000 troops.

At 11:00 A.M. 1 May, Hooker again set his large army in motion. The V and XII Corps moved east along the Turnpike and the Plank Road. The

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<sup>20</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 154.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

cavalry brigade, was left at Chancellorsville during this move.<sup>23</sup> The II and III Corps remained at Chancellorsville and continued to prepare defensive positions.<sup>24</sup> On the Union left, Sedgwick was ordered to threaten an attack in force and continue the threat until receipt of further instructions. After three days of maneuvering, the main bodies were at last about to collide. Map 4 depicts the situation at this time.

The initial contact was made as the Federal V Corps, moving east on the Turnpike, collided with Mahone's Confederate Brigade. During this encounter, Sykes's Division (V Corps) had little difficulty in pressing back the Confederates. Again, for unclear reasons, Hooker ordered a withdrawal to Chancellorsville. Simultaneously, he recalled Slocum and the remainder of the attacking Right Wing.<sup>25</sup> Once again the offensive fires seemed to dim in Joe Hooker and as daylight waned on 1 May, the Army of the Potomac again retreated to the vicinity of Chancellorsville. The decisions made by Hooker on 30 April-1 May, to the great dismay of his corps commanders, in all probability lost the battle for Hooker and the Union.

Confederate forces were equally amazed and, wary of a trap, carefully followed Hooker's return to Chancellorsville. In order to determine Union intent, a detailed reconnaissance was planned and ordered executed at this time.<sup>26</sup> On the Union's Left Wing front at Fredericksburg, all was quiet and no significant action occurred on 1 May. General Stoneman, with

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>24</sup>Gough, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, p. 200.

<sup>25</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 184.

<sup>26</sup>Gough, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, p. 207.

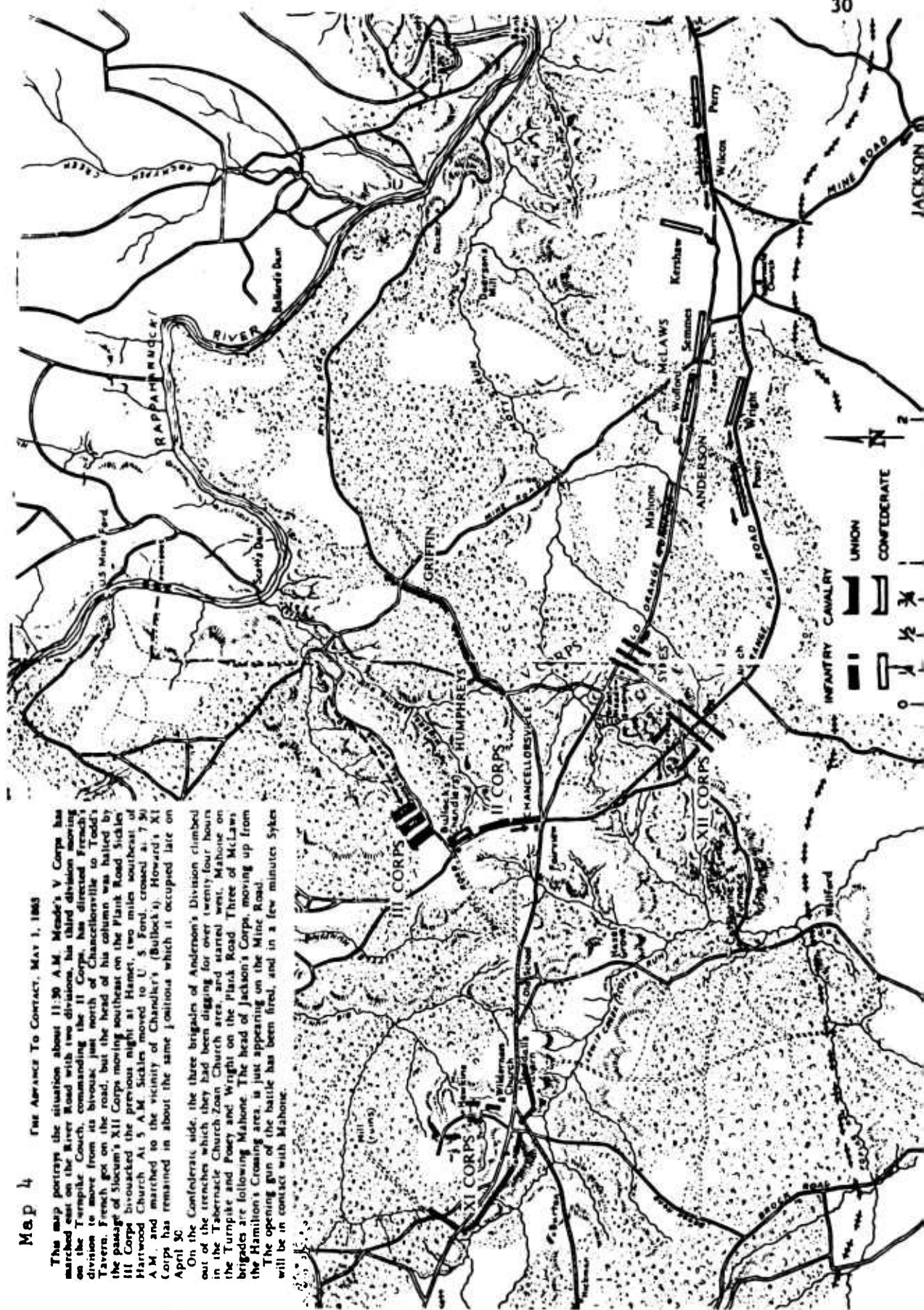
Map 4

FIRE ADVANCE TO CONTACT, MAY 1, 1863

This map portrays the situation about 11:30 A.M. Meade's V Corps has marched east on the River Road with two divisions, his third division moving on the Turnpike Couch, commanding the II Corps. He directed French's division to move from its bivouac just north of Chancellorville to Todd's Tavern. French got on the road, but the head of his column was halted by the passage of Slocum's XII Corps moving southeast on the Plank Road. Sickles' III Corps bivouacked the previous night at Hamet, two miles southeast of Hartwood Church. At 5 A.M. Sickles moved to U. S. Ford, crossed at 7:30 A.M. and marched to the vicinity of Chandler's (Bullock's). Howard's XI Corps has remained in about the same position which it occupied late on April 30.

On the Confederate side, the three brigades of Anderson's Division climbed out of the trenches which they had been digging for over twenty-four hours in the Tabernacle Church Zoan Church area, and started west. Mahone on the Turnpike and Pomeroy and Wright on the Plank Road. Three of McLaws' brigades are following Mahone. The head of Jackson's Corps, moving up from the Hamilton's Crossing area, is just appearing on the Mine Road.

The opening gun of the battle has been fired, and in a few minutes Sykes will be in contact with Mahone.



half the cavalry corps, had disappeared to the south and was out of contact with Hooker. The remainder of the cavalry corps, under Averell, was a Rapidan Station and had indulged in ineffective sparring with W. H. F. Lee's Brigade. An annoyed Hooker recalled Averell at 6:30 P.M. 1 May and directed him to return to the U.S. Ford area.<sup>27</sup> With these actions all major Federal activity ceased on 1 May 1863.

As evening settled over the dense pine thickets, the two armies relaxed into a camp routine. General Jackson arrived at Decker's Crossroads just before dark and met with General Lee at that location. This was to be the last war council between these great generals. History is less than exact as to what occurred at this meeting with regard to what words were spoken and to whom credit should rest for the decisions made and plans formulated. It was, in fairness to all concerned, best described as a joint effort.

General Jackson believed that it was Hooker's intention to continue his retreat to the north side of the Rappahannock, under cover of darkness.<sup>28</sup> While hoping that this might be the case, General Lee had serious reservations concerning this course of action. He did not believe that Hooker would abandon his foothold south of the Rappahannock so easily.<sup>29</sup> Reconnaissance along the Federal Front indicated that Hooker's left was firmly anchored on the Rappahannock, east of U.S. Mine Ford, near Scott's Dam. The Union center near Chancellorsville was being hastily fortified with shallow earth trenches and abatis. As yet, no one had

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 211-212.

<sup>28</sup>J. H. Wilson, The Campaign of Chancellorsville (April 27-May 5, 1862), by Major John Bigelow, Jr., USA, A Critical Review (Wilmington, Delaware: Chas L. Story, 1911), p. 31.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

seen the Union right flank, but it was assumed to be anchored on the Rapidan River and reconnaissance efforts were continuing to discover its exact location. Map 5 indicates the position of the armies during the evening of 1 May 1863.

As the conference between Lee and Jackson continued, it was decided that the Union Left was too firmly anchored to attack. Likewise, the Union Center was in such strength that the chance of success of an attack there was dim at best.<sup>30</sup> The only promising option therefore appeared to lie in a turning movement against the Union Right and a movement in that general direction was quickly agreed upon. To Jackson fell the details of planning the attack and to his corps fell the task of conducting the assault. General Stuart and all available Confederate cavalry were assigned the task of covering the movement.<sup>31</sup>

The historic conference was thus concluded and it should be observed that here Lee made the second in a series of decisive decisions. He was unwavering in his belief that the main attack was to be delivered from Chancellorsville and not Fredericksburg. Lee was virtually alone in this opinion, as most of his high ranking officers held the opposite view.<sup>32</sup> Their objections notwithstanding, Lee moved to further divide his army into three components, and as a result, Jackson's Corps began final preparations for the coming battle.

Early, on 2 May 1863, General Hooker again reduced his Left Wing and ordered John F. Reynold's I Corps to join him at Chancellorsville.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

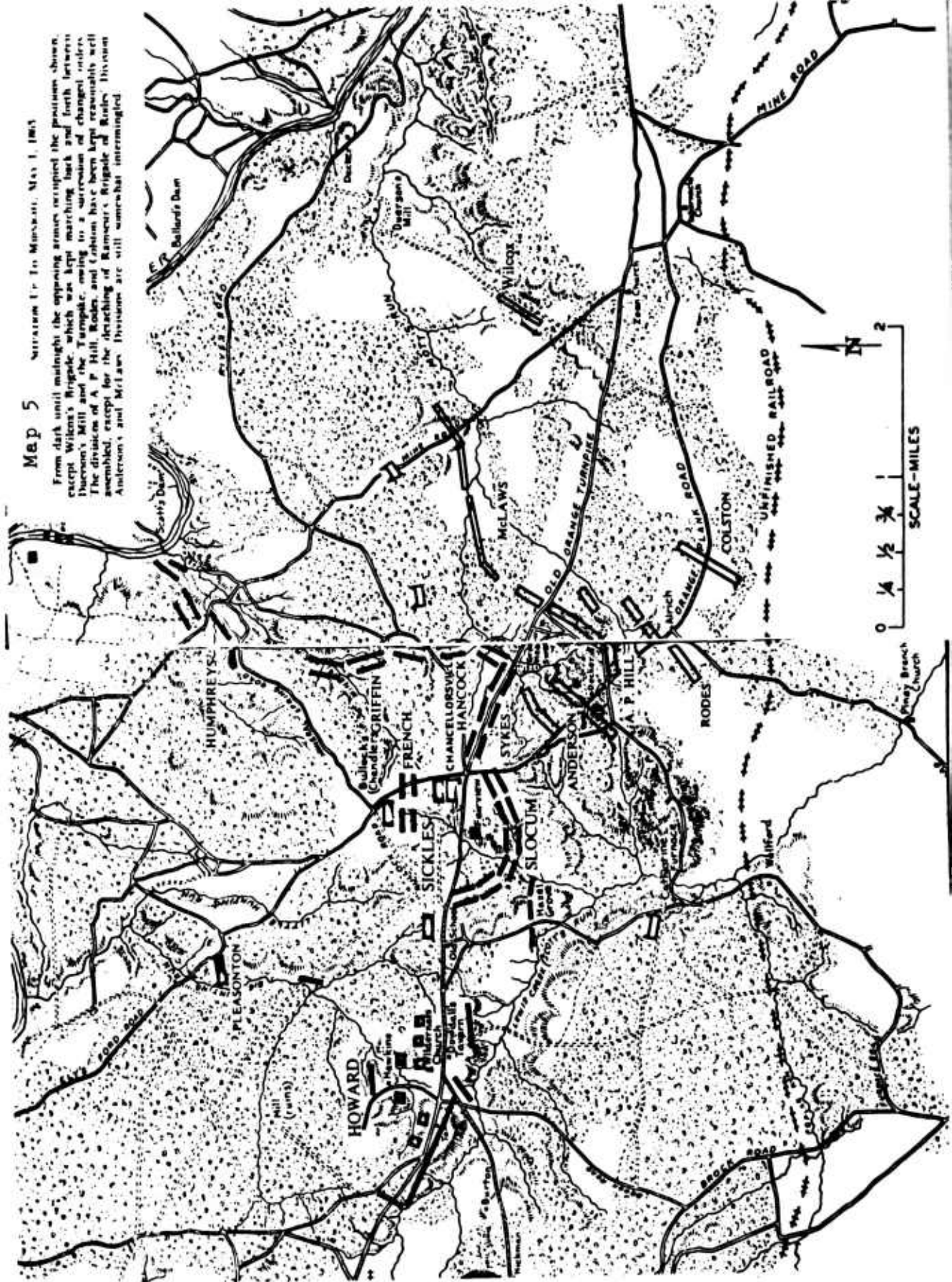
<sup>32</sup>Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 263.

<sup>33</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 2, p. 351.

Map 5

Situation 17 - In March, May 1, 1863

From dark until midnight the opposing armies occupied the positions shown, except Wilcox's Brigade which was kept marching back and forth between Thurston's Mill and the Turnpike, owing to a succession of changed orders. The divisions of A. P. Hill, Roden and Latham have been kept reasonably well assembled, except for the detachment of Ramoer's Brigade at Rodes' Division. Anderson's and McLean's Divisions are still somewhat intermingled.



This is significant in that after detaching the I Corps, General Sedgwick was left with only the VI Corps under his command in the Union Left Wing at Fredericksburg. As Hooker was taking action to further strengthen his right wing, General Lee was speaking for the last time with his most trusted and respected lieutenant, T. J. Jackson. Shortly after 7:30 A.M., General Lee stood at the crossroad at Decker to watch the start of Jackson's march. As Jackson rode by the leaders conferred briefly for the final time. Salutes were exchanged and Stonewall Jackson rode to glory.<sup>34</sup>

General Lee's plan to conceal his weak center position, was to redistribute the divisions of Anderson and McLaws and to demonstrate in force with them in front of the strong Union Center. The demonstration was to serve as a diversion until Jackson's Corps could march the ten miles necessary to reach their attack positions on Hooker's right flank.

The audacity of the move is overwhelming, for Lee retained only one third of his infantry and one fifth of his artillery for the demonstration. This force amounted to 13,000 men and 24 cannons.<sup>35</sup> With Jackson rode 31,700 men and 112 guns, all involved in making the turning movement.<sup>36</sup> Little credit is due Hooker when one realizes that from 7:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., 2 May 1863, this small Confederate covering force was in fact able to immobilize the 70,000 Union troops present at Chancellorsville.

As the day progressed, Jackson continued his march down the Catharpin road to the Brock road, thence to the Plank road and finally north to the Turnpike. Map 6 portrays this march. The march of Jackson's

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<sup>34</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 209.

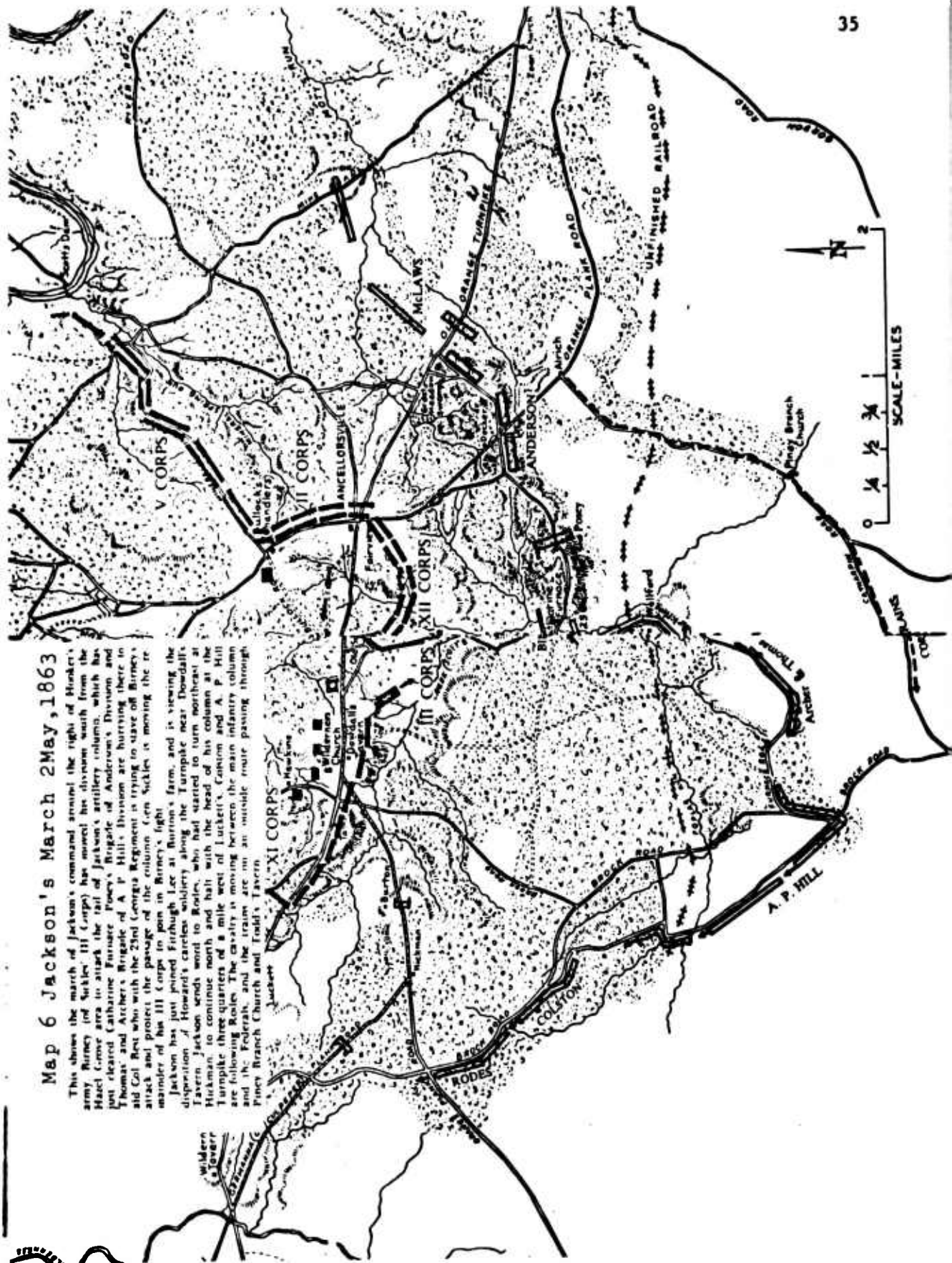
<sup>35</sup>Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 273.

<sup>36</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 206.

# Map 6 Jackson's March 2 May, 1863

This shows the march of Jackson's command around the right of Burney's army. Burney (of Sicks' III Corps) has moved his division south from the Hazel Grove area to attack the tail of Jackson's artillery column, which has just cleared Catherine Furness Pines. Brigade of Anderson's Division and Thomas and Archer's Brigade of A. P. Hill's Division are hurrying there in attack and protect the passage of the column. Gen Sicks is moving the remainder of his III Corps to join in Burney's fight.

Jackson has just joined Fitzhugh Lee at Burney's farm, and is viewing the disposition of Howard's careless soldiery along the Turnpike near Dowdall's Tavern. Jackson sends word to Rodes, who had started to turn northeast at the Turnpike to continue north and halt with the head of his column at the Turnpike three-quarters of a mile west of Luckett's Farm and A. P. Hill are following Rodes. The cavalry is moving between the main infantry column and the Federals, and the trains are on an outside route passing through Piney Branch Church and Todd's Tavern.



Corps was observed at various points on the route by several Union units. Yet, no decisive Union reaction was launched to prevent the move. On the morning of 2 May, as Jackson commenced his march, Hooker was conducting an inspection of Federal positions. Shortly after 9:00 A.M., he was informed that Confederate troops were moving continuously across his front. He could even at this time personally see a portion of Jackson's column.<sup>37</sup> Hooker then examined a map and, according to J. Watts de Peyster, he said, ". . . It can't be retreat; retreat without a fight? THAT IS NOT LEE. If not retreat what is it? Lee is trying to flank me."<sup>38</sup> From this quote, it is obvious that Hooker understood the true nature of Jackson's movement as early as 9:15 A.M. on 2 May 1863. At 9:30 A.M. he so informed General Howard (XI Corps) and directed him to adjust his defenses in order to protect against an attack from the west.<sup>39</sup>

At approximately 9:30 A.M., realizing that Lee had redeployed his forces, Hooker ordered Sedgwick to take advantage of every opportunity to attack at Fredericksburg. With these actions completed, Hooker felt his position was secure and he continued to wait.<sup>40</sup> As the day progressed, Hooker's orders to Sedgwick became more direct, as follows:

. . . The Major General commanding directs that General Sedgwick, as soon as indications will permit; capture Fredericksburg and everything in it; and vigorously pursue the enemy. We know the enemy is fleeing, trying to save his trains. Two of Sickles' divisions are among them. . . .<sup>41</sup>

It is apparent that Hooker changed his mind as to the meaning of Confederate movements to his front. His logic apparently convinced him

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<sup>37</sup> Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 276.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 276-277.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 290.

that Lee could not attack faced with the current situation and confronted by Hooker's larger army. However, why Hooker's correct assumption at 9:30 A.M. (that Lee was flanking him) evolved between 9:30 A.M. and 4:10 P.M. to the erroneous assumption that Lee was retreating is nowhere satisfactorily explained. It now becomes apparent that Hooker's strategy was simply to sit and wait with the massive Union Right Wing, while Sedgwick with one corps was ordered to attack Lee's army from what Hooker hoped would be the rear.

By 5:00 P.M., 2 May, Jackson's Corps had completed its march around the Federal right flank virtually unopposed. The relative positions of the opposing armies were as shown on Map 7. At 5:15 P.M. General Jackson ordered the attack to commence.<sup>42</sup> Upon receipt of his order, the massed divisions of Robert E. Rodes, Robert E. Colston, and A. P. Hill surged wildly forward, driving before them the startled forest creatures who fled in terror through the Union defenses. Rodes' division fell like banshees upon the two hapless regiments of Howard's XI Corps who faced west. These unsuspecting troops bore the brunt of the initial assault and barely had time to take arms before being overwhelmed by the charging Confederates. By 7:15 P.M. the Union XI Corps was shattered and fleeing in great disarray toward Chancellorsville. Map 8 shows the positions of the combatants at this time.

Fighting continued to ebb and flow in the vicinity of Wilderness Church and Dowdall's Tavern, as darkness closed in. The Union forces continued to stiffen resistance and launched at least one unsuccessful major counter-attack. Night, confusions, casualties, and exhaustion

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<sup>42</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 238.



# Map 8 Jackson's Attack 2 May, 1863

Soon after Jackson launched his attack, the broken XI Corps was fleeing east in great disorder. Scales by 7:15 P. M. had broken off his movement to the south and withdrew and had faced Roney, Whipple and Williams back toward the Turnpike to stem the Confederate advance. But the first unit sent north to assist Howard was the 8th Pennsylvania Cavalry, then near Hazel Grove. This regiment promptly marched south, ran into the Confederates moving along the Turnpike, made its heroic but costly charge, after which the surviving members made their way back in the Chancellor House where they were reformed.

Federal artillery at Hazel Grove and Fairview is firing effectively. Sykes has moved northward along the Ely's Ford Road. Reynolds, who had received orders at 7 A. M. that day to march to Chancellorville, has reached U. S. Ford with two of his three divisions, his third division is some six miles to the rear. Barlow's brigade of Howard's corps has not yet received orders to break off its advance south.

The Confederate attack has lost its initial momentum; the units at the front having become disoriented and unimpaired in the darkness and the woods. Jackson has ordered Hill to pass through Rodes and resume the assault.



brought a halt to the battle near midnight on 2 May. It had been an auspicious day for Confederate forces. The Confederate attack had been spectacularly successful against all odds, but a stiff price was paid. General T. J. Jackson was mortally wounded by his own pickets and removed from the field. General A. P. Hill, next in command, was also wounded and retired. Young J. E. B. Stuart, the cavalry commander, was thus elevated to command Jackson's vaunted corps.

On the morning of 3 May, the battle was joined again. The Federal I Corps (Reynolds) had arrived at Chancellorsville, thus in effect replacing the shattered XI Corps. Hooker's effective force at Chancellorsville, in spite of his losses, now numbered 86,000 men and 244 guns compared to Lee's force of 45,000 men and 132 guns.<sup>43</sup> The Union army, though crippled, was still a mighty force and despite its setbacks on 2 May still had every reason to believe that victory was attainable. However, as previously mentioned, Hooker with 86,000 men chose to wait and passed the offensive burden to Sedgwick, who now commanded only 23,000 men.<sup>44</sup>

During the afternoon and evening of 2 May, Sedgwick had in fact crossed the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg. By 11:00 A.M. 3 May, he had succeeded in attacking the city and had driven Early's division from their positions on Marye's Heights.<sup>45</sup> This was the only Union success in battle during the entire campaign and it was short lived at best. After securing Fredericksburg, General Sedgwick commenced his movement toward Chancellorsville as ordered. His advance followed an axis generally west along the Turnpike. General Early, though driven from Marye's Heights,

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

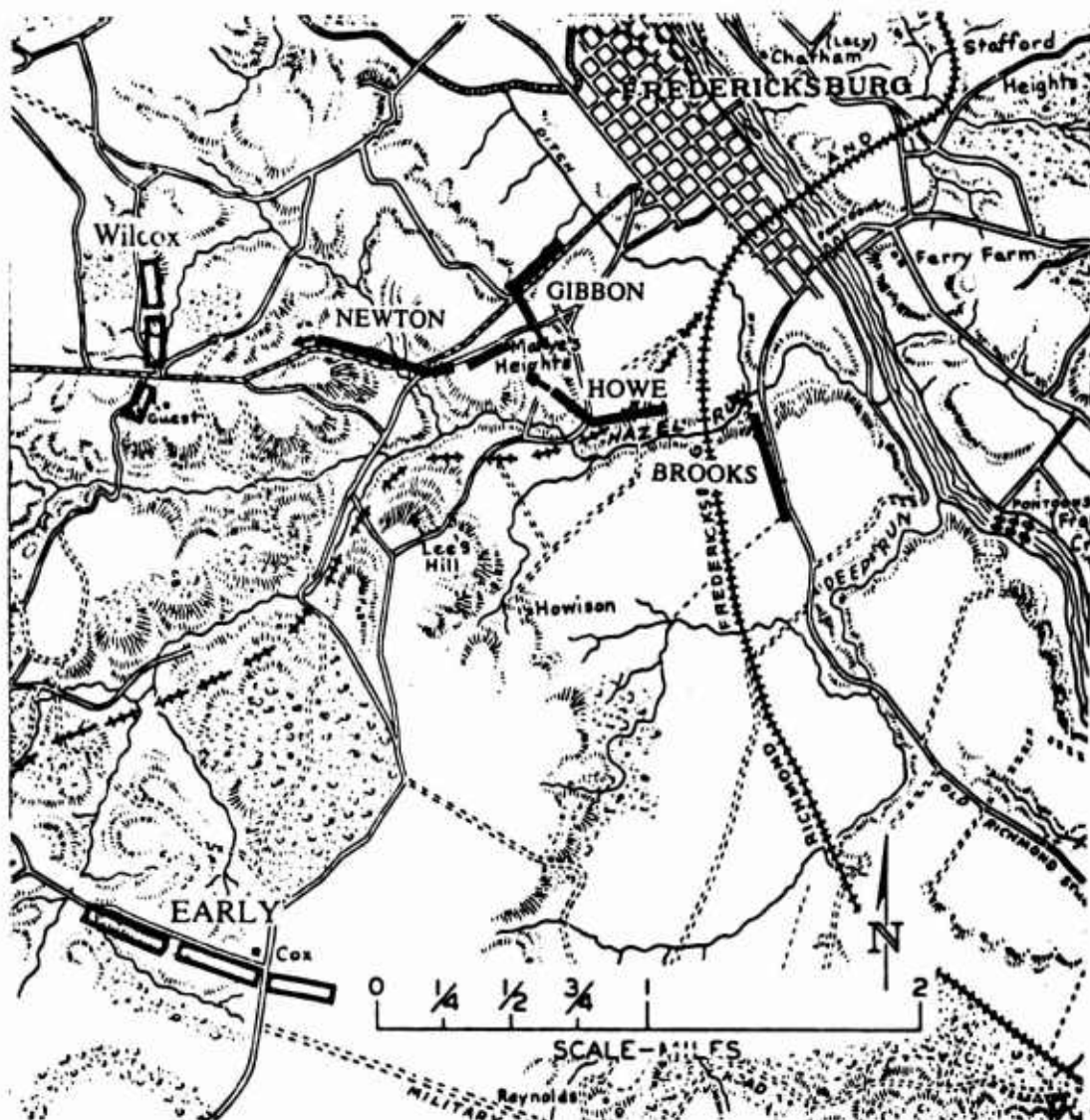
<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

was not decisively defeated and assumed positions some two miles southwest of Fredericksburg and observed Sedgwick's movement toward Chancellorsville. Map 9 depicts the situation on the Fredericksburg front at 1:00 P.M. 3 May.

At Chancellorsville, the Union Army continued to wait for Sedgwick's attack against Lee's rear. As noted, the Federals still maintained decisive superiority in terms of manpower and equipment. Considering all aspects, all factors seemed to favor the Federal force, but while the battle was not yet over, its outcome from this point was not in doubt. General Lee was imbued with the will to win, while Hooker was even now considering how best to extricate himself before he lost his army.

General Stuart continued to press the attacks at Chancellorsville and as shown on Map 10, Lee's right and left wings at Chancellorsville were joined by 10:00 A.M. on 3 May. Again the Union had abandoned key terrain at Fairview and Hazel Grove without a fight. During the afternoon of 3 May 1863, one further event occurred which continued to bode ill for the Federal cause. General Hooker was knocked unconscious on the front porch of the Chancellor's house when a Confederate shell hit the large white column upon which he was leaning. Though he appeared to recover rapidly, some believe that his mental processes may have been temporarily impaired.

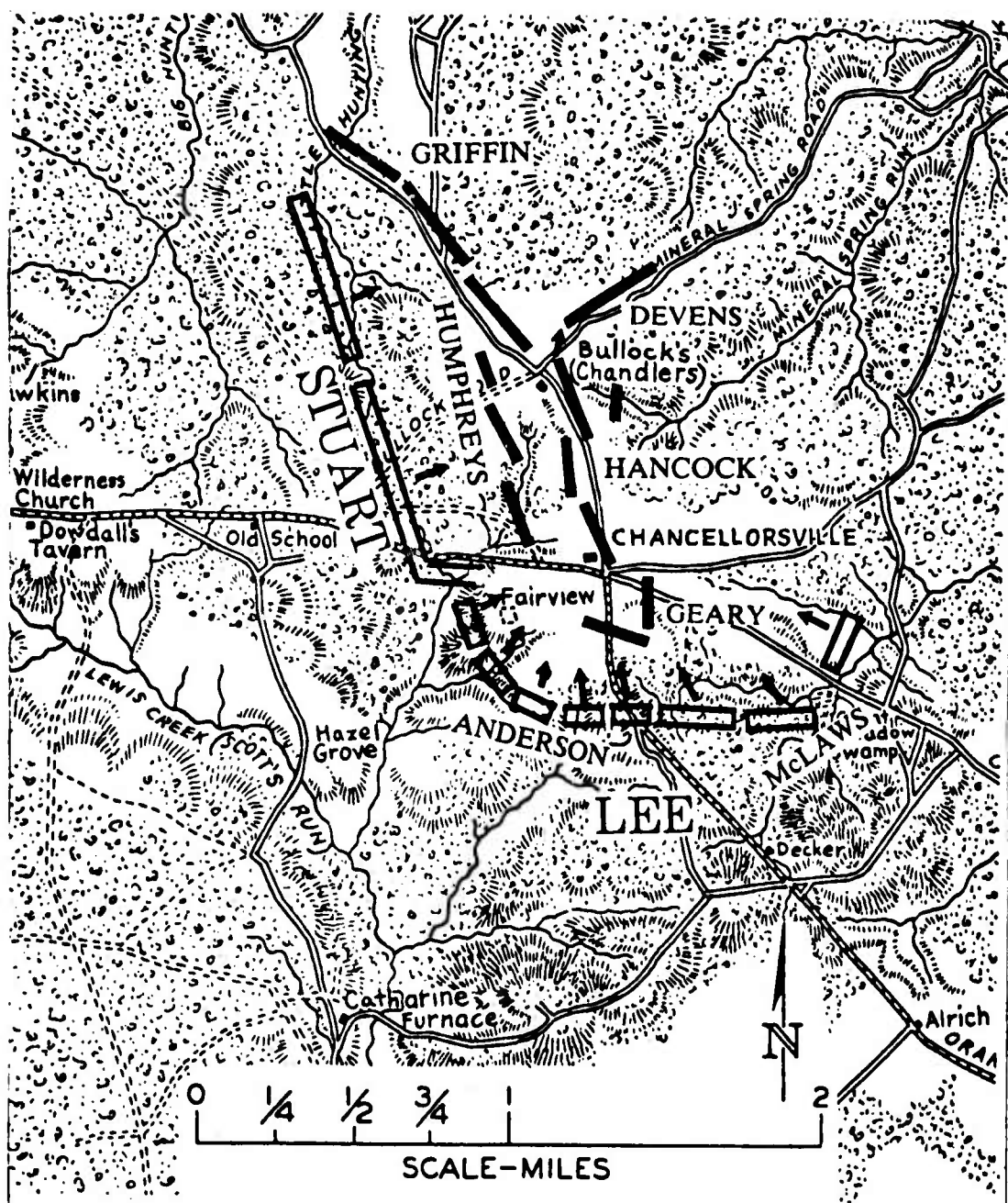
By 4:00 P.M. 3 May, General Sedgwick, upon whom all the Union hopes now rested, had advanced to the vicinity of Salem Church, on the Plank Road. Here he was met by Brook's and McLaw's Confederate divisions. This engagement, known as the Battle of Salem Church, ended in a stalemate as darkness fell on the night of 3 May. Map 11 shows the position of forces at the Battle of Salem Church as well as the disposition of forces at Chancellorsville on the afternoon of 3 May.



M&P 9 CONFEDERATE WITHDRAWAL FROM FREDERICKSBURG

This shows the situation about 1 P. M., May 3, 1863. Early's Division withdrew down the Telegraph Road and assembled near Cox's. Wilcox's Brigade marched west on the Plank Road and occupied a delaying position near Guest's.

Sedgwick moved out slowly on the Plank Road to join Hooker at Chancellorsville, as ordered. Gibbon moved through the town and occupied Marye's Heights. The leading division of the VI Corps, Newton's, delayed to allow Howe and Brooks to catch up. This allowed the Confederates time to reorganize, and permitted Lee to reinforce Wilcox.



Map 10 THE CONFEDERATES CAPTURE CHANCELLORSVILLE

The situation about 10 A.M., May 3, 1863, as Lee's two wings unite for the final drive to clear Chancellorsville. Hooker has ceased to function, and his divisions—still full of fight—reluctantly pull out to the north.



On 4 May, General Early reoccupied his old positions on Marye's Heights and was thus squarely behind General Sedgwick, still at Salem Church. In this classic, chess-like battle, the tables were again turned on the Union forces, for now Sedgwick was caught between Anderson and McLaws to his front and Early to his rear. Instead of placing Lee in the trap, Sedgwick himself was now entrapped between the two Confederate forces, and his route of withdrawal was effectively blocked.<sup>46</sup>

During the early hours of 5 May, Sedgwick and the VI Corps retired via Scotts Ford to the north side of the Rappahannock. With the threat to his rear now ended, Lee prepared to administer the coup de grace at Chancellorsville. However, Hooker had apparently had his fill of the ubiquitous Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia. At midnight on 4 May, Hooker called a war council of his corps commanders. The question addressed was generally what the Army should do now. Generals Meade, Reynolds and Howard voted to continue the offensive, while Generals Couch and Sickles voted to retreat.<sup>47</sup> In spite of the majority in favor of the attack, Hooker opted for the retreat.<sup>48</sup>

During the day and night of 5 May, the Army of the Potomac retreated across the Rappahannock and by 6 May had returned to their old positions in Falmouth. General Lee had planned a major offensive for 6 May and he was informed by his skirmishers that the Union defenses were empty.<sup>49</sup> Though keenly disappointed that he had once again missed the opportunity to inflict a total defeat on the Army of the Potomac, Lee had nonetheless won the greatest battle of his career. Southern soil was

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 349.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 352.

intact. He had inflicted a fearful defeat on his adversary, though he had also suffered. Most important, his victory had for now preserved the Confederacy and paved the way for Confederate offensive action into Maryland and Pennsylvania in the spring and summer of 1863.

## Chapter III

### CAVALRY OPERATIONS DURING THE CHANCELLORSVILLE CAMPAIGN

The American Civil War was the first major conflict of a new industrial age. It may well have found its origins in the Industrial Revolution, and it pitted a commercially and industrially oriented North against an aristocratic and agrarian South. In addition to the resolution of the economic and moral issues at stake, the Civil War also served as a proving ground for both new weapons and new tactics.

One of the most dramatic impacts of the Industrial Revolution was the introduction of rifled firearms to replace smoothbore muskets and cannons. These new weapons provided a marked increase in accuracy, range, and lethality which produced an equally dramatic change in the tactics which could be successfully employed on the battlefield.

Probably no force of American arms felt the tactical and weaponry changes more directly than the cavalry. The increased lethality of rifled firearms produced drastic changes in American cavalry tactics. Age-old tactics and techniques long advocated and employed in Europe were modified to fit the changed conditions on the American battlefields. Lance and saber gave way rapidly to carbine and pistol as the normal cavalry arms. There were few grand cavalry charges, as advocated in Europe. However, cavalry possessed a mobility differential which made its service valuable during a period when great infantry battles were characterized by mass slaughter and an advantage for the defender caused by newer and more powerful weapons.

The cavalry tactics which emerged combined the more traditional roles for cavalry, such as reconnaissance, security, covering force, and pursuit missions, with new and different tactics. In the most innovative American tactic, cavalry forces began to operate on independent missions, away from the main body of the army. These independent missions were normally planned as deep, long range reconnaissance raids, designed to gather information on the enemy, disrupt and destroy his lines of communication, and destroy logistics facilities.

In the northern Virginia theater the cavalrymen served primarily as mounted riflemen who used the mobility and speed of the horse to bring rifle and light artillery fire to bear on selected enemy targets. In the role of mounted riflemen, Civil War cavalrymen often fought dismounted and they became equally adept at both mounted and dismounted combat. The ability of cavalry units to fight both mounted and dismounted produced other changes in cavalry tactics which will become more apparent in the discussion of cavalry tactics during the Chancellorsville Campaign.

In order to evaluate the effects of cavalry during the Chancellorsville Campaign, it is essential to possess some understanding of the perceived roles which the army leaders expected their cavalry units to play in the battle. Here, it is important to note that during the conduct of this study no single authoritative source was discovered which defined the roles assigned to Federal and Confederate cavalry. Numerous sources are available which cover cavalry drill regulations, formations and commands. However, no source was identified which dealt with the strategy, philosophy or methods by which cavalry should or could have been employed. While no definitive document concerning cavalry employment was found, a general

pattern of acceptable methods of employing cavalry is discernible in the numerous sources consulted during the reserach for this study. In general, they support the thesis that the primary missions of Civil War cavalry forces were reconnaissance and security operations. These missions were expanded by the changing tactics of the period to include long range raids on enemy communications and logistic facilities and led to the increased use of large independent cavalry raids, often conducted deep into enemy territory. At Chancellorsville, both Army commanders employed their cavalry units in a different and contrasting manner; however, the employment of cavalry on both sides was within the general guidelines presented above.

Before moving to the specific performance of cavalry units during the Chancellorsville Campaign, it is helpful to briefly review three topics relating to the cavalry units employed at Chancellorsville. The first of these topics concerns the status of the cavalry units within their respective armies. The second explores the past performance of cavalry units and their leaders as a method of establishing morale, esprit and combat efficiency. The third investigates the organization and equipment of the respective cavalry forces.

At the outbreak of hostilities in 1861, the cavalry forces available to the Union Army consisted of six independent cavalry regiments.<sup>1</sup> Owing to the belief that the war was to be short and that the rebellion would be quickly crushed, there were no initial attempts to increase the

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<sup>1</sup>Charles D. Rhodes, History of the Cavalry of the Army of the Potomac, Including that of the Army of Virginia (Pope's) and also the Operations of the Federal Cavalry in West Virginia (Kansas City, MO: Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Co., 1900), p. 5.

size of the Federal cavalry. This decision was due primarily to the expense involved in equipping cavalry units, the time required to train them, and the belief of many Federal officers that cavalry would be useless in restrictive terrain against modern weapons.<sup>2</sup>

On 27 July 1861, Major General George B. McClellan assumed command of the Federal force which would later be designated the Army of the Potomac. McClellan's army contained six regular cavalry regiments; however, for nearly two years, the history of these regiments was marked by neglect, disorganization and misuse. Typical missions assigned the cavalry during this period were postings to duty as guides, orderlies and grooms for higher ranking staff officers. The regiments and their squadrons were divided between corps, divisions, and brigades. There was no unity of command and little unity of effort. In general, the Federal cavalry forces were held in low regard by the remainder of the Federal Army in the Virginia theater.<sup>3</sup>

The Federal cavalry suffered from additional shortcomings other than their reputation within the Army. In the Virginia theater, Federal cavalry recruits came primarily from large northeastern cities and urban manufacturing areas. They were not, as a rule, accustomed to outdoor life, firearms, or horses. On the other side, Confederate cavalymen, in general, were recruited from rural areas. Most of them had learned how to shoot and ride at an early age and were initially better suited to the rigors of cavalry life.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>George T. Denison, History of the Cavalry from Earliest Times with Lessons for the Future (London: MacMillan and Co., 1877), p. 440.

One additional situation failed to favor Federal cavalry during the early stage of the Civil War, for initially the South possessed more capable cavalry leaders. The Confederate leaders and even the corps and army commanders, possessed greater foresight and imagination regarding uses and employment of cavalry. Prior to the start of the war, the United States Army consisted of almost 17,000 officers and men. Most of the troops were from the northern states, but the majority of the officers were from the South. When the southern states seceded, the majority of the troops remained loyal to the Union; however, many of the most able officers supported the Confederacy.<sup>5</sup> Among the very capable officers who had previously served in the U.S. Cavalry and subsequently joined the Confederacy were Joseph E. Johnston, J. E. B. Stuart, Earl VanDorn, John B. Hood, Fitzhugh Lee, and Robert E. Lee.<sup>6</sup>

The adaptability of southern recruits to cavalry life and the edge in experienced leadership provided many benefits to Confederate cavalry units in the early stages of the war. Prior to the Chancellorsville Campaign, the Confederate cavalry had already participated in numerous raids against the Federal army, while, as mentioned, the Federal cavalry had been relegated to less important missions. For this reason, Confederate cavalry had gained a wealth of experience and was totally confident of its ability to beat the best the Federal army could put on the field of battle. This operational and emotional edge gave Confederate cavalry an advantage at Chancellorsville. Therefore, it is worth mentioning

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<sup>5</sup>J. F. C. Fuller, The Conduct of War, 1789-1961 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1961), p. 103.

<sup>6</sup>James D. Lunt, Charge to Glory (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1960), p. 114.

some of its early exploits in order to depict the wide gap in confidence and experience between Confederate cavalry and Federal cavalry prior to the Chancellorsville Campaign. These raids also tend to emphasize the manner in which General R. E. Lee preferred to employ his cavalry.

The first large Confederate cavalry raid was made against General McCiellan's army on the Peninsula in June 1862. During this operation, which was a reconnaissance in force, General Stuart and 2,500 cavalrymen rode completely around the Federal army, gathering intelligence and destroying supplies, ammunition and equipment.<sup>7</sup> A short time later, on 22 August 1862, Stuart was back in action, this time in a dash against the rear of Major General Pope's army near Catlett Station, Virginia. During this operation, Stuart's cavalry captured four hundred prisoners, five hundred horses, \$20,000.00 in gold and currency, and came very close to capturing General Pope. This raid also provided the intelligence which R. E. Lee used to plan the movement of Stonewall Jackson through Thoroughfare Gap, which ended in the Second Battle of Manassas and the defeat of Pope's army.<sup>8</sup>

On 9 October 1862 after the Battle of Antietam, Stuart launched perhaps his greatest cavalry exploit. In this operation, Stuart with 1,800 troops and four pieces of horse artillery penetrated Federal positions and marched north to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. There he destroyed the telegraph lines in all directions, damaged the railroads, and captured horses. He then led the pursuing Federal cavalry on a futile chase and eventually reentered his own lines near Leesburg, Virginia.

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<sup>7</sup>Denison, History of Cavalry, p. 449.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 450.

Once again Stuart had ridden around the Federal army with only minor losses, causing great anguish and frustration to Federal leaders.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the shortcomings apparent in the Federal cavalry, they did possess a significant advantage over their Confederate counterparts prior to and during the Chancellorsville Campaign. This advantage was both a numerical and technological superiority. The Federal cavalry Corps numbered almost 10,000 troopers available for the Chancellorsville Campaign, while the Confederate cavalry had only 2,500 cavalymen available. In addition to their numerical advantage, northern cavalymen were armed with Sharp's carbines, a breech-loading, single-shot cavalry rifle. Prior to the Chancellorsville Campaign they began to receive the Spencer carbine, which was better than the Sharp's rifle. The Confederate cavalry, on the other hand, was not issued a standard cavalry rifle and was armed with a variety of weapons ranging from shotguns and muskets to captured Federal carbines.

At the time of the Chancellorsville Campaign, both Federal and Confederate cavalry were organized in essentially the same manner. That is, all cavalry forces were under the command of a single cavalry general. This organization was new for the Army of the Potomac. As noted in Chapter II, one of Hooker's more important reorganization innovations was the realignment of Federal cavalry into a single corps. This consolidation of cavalry under a single commander appears to be the first recognizable step taken to increase the proficiency of the Federal cavalry.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 453.

<sup>10</sup>Rhodes, History of the Cavalry of the Army of the Potomac, p. 31.

In this writer's opinion, this Federal cavalry organization was driven by the success achieved by Confederate cavalry. Further, it appears to be an attempt to produce a cavalry force which could emulate the tactics and operations of Confederate cavalry.

In comparing the opposing cavalry forces, prior to Chancellorsville, it is apparent that the Confederacy possessed an experience and emotional advantage, while the Union possessed a numerical and technological advantage. Though the South probably owned the overall edge in January 1863, the constant attrition resulting from continuous operations was beginning to take its toll. Problems of replacing horses, men, and weapons were just beginning to appear at a time when the Federal leadership first began to realize the strategic value of possessing a strong cavalry force.<sup>11</sup>

The approaching campaign then would pit an inexperienced and newly reorganized Federal cavalry against a veteran, efficient and effective Confederate cavalry. For the Federal army, Chancellorsville would be a time of testing and learning for its fledgling cavalry. For the Confederate army, Chancellorsville produced further grinding attrition and it was the last major campaign in which Confederate cavalry would enjoy its habitual domination of Federal cavalry.

As in Chapter II, cavalry actions associated with the Chancellorsville Campaign will be reviewed in the chronological periods established by John Bigelow, Jr. in his Campaign of Chancellorsville. The review of the preparation phase, 25 January to 26 April 1863, will address the

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<sup>11</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 60.

organization of both cavalry forces, their dispositions, the methods in which they were employed, the skirmish at Hartwood Church, and the engagement at Kelly's Ford. The review of the execution phase, 27 April to 7 May 1863, will cover activities of both Federal and Confederate cavalry forces on the Chancellorsville battlefields, and Stoneman's Raid, which occurred simultaneously with the broader battle at Chancellorsville.

The first major activity of the preparation phase was the reorganization of Federal cavalry and the redistribution of Confederate cavalry, following the Fredericksburg Campaign which ended in January of 1863. On 5 February 1863, Hooker issued General Order No. 6, which, among other changes, created the Cavalry Corps, Army of the Potomac. Brigadier General George Stoneman was appointed to command the newly formed corps.<sup>12</sup> Stoneman published his assumption of command in Cavalry Corps Order No. 1 on 7 February 1863. In this order he stated that picket and other duties would continue as before.<sup>13</sup>

After reviewing his forces and analyzing his mission, Stoneman published Cavalry Corps General Order No. 4 on 12 February 1863.<sup>14</sup> This order contained the organization of the corps, named subordinate commanders and provided instructions for deploying the cavalry corps on their initial mission. This mission was to provide security for the Army of the Potomac. The organization directed in General Order No. 4 is shown in Chart 3. The organization depicted in Chart 3 was the organization used by Federal cavalry prior to and during the Chancellorsville Campaign.

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<sup>12</sup>OR., XXV, pt. 2, p. 51.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

## Chart 3

## CAVALRY CORPS

Major General George Stoneman

FIRST DIVISION

Brigadier General Alfred Pleasonton

1st Brigade (COL B. F. Davis)

8th Illinois  
 3rd Indiana  
 8th New York  
 9th New York

2nd Brigade (COL T. C. Devin)

1st Michigan  
 6th New York  
 8th Pennsylvania  
 17th Pennsylvania

Artillery - New York Light, 6th Battery

SECOND DIVISION

Brigadier General William W. Averell

1st Brigade (COL H. B. Sargent)

1st Massachusetts  
 4th New York  
 6th Ohio  
 1st Rhode Island

2nd Brigade (COL J. B. McIntosh)

3rd Pennsylvania  
 4th Pennsylvania  
 16th Pennsylvania

Artillery - 2nd U.S., Battery A

THIRD DIVISION

Brigadier General David Mc M. Gregg

1st Brigade (COL J. Kilpatrick)

1st Maine  
 2nd New York  
 10th New York

2nd Brigade (COL P. Wyndham)

12th Illinois  
 1st Maryland  
 1st New Jersey  
 1st Pennsylvania

## Chart 3 (continued)

RESERVE BRIGADE

Brigadier General John Buford

6th Pennsylvania  
1st U.S. Cavalry  
2nd U.S. Cavalry  
5th U.S. Cavalry  
6th U.S. Cavalry

ARTILLERY2nd U.S.

Batteries B &amp; M

4th U.S.

Battery E

SOURCE: Rhodes, History of Cavalry, Army of the Potomac, p. 182.

In January 1863, the Confederate Cavalry Division of the Army of Northern Virginia was commanded by Major General J. E. B. Stuart. It numbered 10,000 men at this time. Following the battle of Fredericksburg, Stuart's cavalry division was redeployed and widely scattered over much of Virginia and West Virginia. The Second Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Wade Hampton, was sent south of the James River on a recruiting mission.<sup>15</sup> The Fourth Brigade, under Brigadier General William E. Jones, was placed on detached duty and later conducted an independent raid on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad from 21 April 1863 to 21 May 1863.<sup>16</sup> The remainder of Stuart's division, consisting of the brigades commanded by Brigadier Generals W. H. F. Lee and Fitzhugh Lee remained with the Army of Northern Virginia near Frederickburg, Virginia. The Confederate organization of the cavalry division, prior to and during the Chancellorsville Campaign, is shown in Chart 4.

The total strengths of the opposing cavalry forces on 10 February 1863 were as follows:

FEDERAL CAVALRY, PRESENT AND EQUIPPED<sup>17</sup>

Officers	425
Troops	9,633
Cannon	28

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., XXV, pt. 1, p. 794.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., XXV, pt. 2, p. 65.

## Chart 4

CAVALRY DIVISION

Major General J. E. B. Stuart

First Brigade\*

BG Wade Hampton

1st North Carolina  
 1st South Carolina  
 2nd South Carolina  
 Cobbs Georgia Legion

Third Brigade

BG W. H. F. Lee

2nd North Carolina  
 5th Virginia  
 9th Virginia  
 10th Virginia  
 13th Virginia  
 15th Virginia

Second Brigade

BG Fitzhugh Lee

1st Virginia  
 2nd Virginia  
 3rd Virginia  
 4th Virginia

Fourth Brigade\*

BG W. E. Jones

1st Maryland  
 6th Virginia  
 7th Virginia  
 11th Virginia  
 12th Virginia  
 34th Virginia Battalion  
 35th Virginia Battalion

HORSE ARTILLERY

Major R. F. Beckman

Lynchburg Beauregards  
 Stuart Horse Artillery  
 Virginia Battery  
 Washington Artillery

\* Detached - not present at Chancellorsville.

SOURCE: OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 794.

CONFEDERATE CAVALRY, PRESENT AND EQUIPPED<sup>18</sup>

Officers	403
Troops	5,912
Cannon	12

The Confederate figures presented here are correct, but perhaps misleading. They continue to show Hampton's First Brigade; but as previously noted, Hampton's Brigade was not present in the vicinity of Chancellorsville. The total strength present at Chancellorsville with Stuart was between 2,500 and 3,000 men, not counting partisan ranger units commanded by Captain John S. Mosby. Mosby's partisans operated in the same general area of operations as Stuart's cavalry division. While Mosby provided superior service to the Army of Northern Virginia, his exploits are not covered in detail by this study but will be mentioned as they relate to the Chancellorsville Campaign.

On 12 February 1863, General Stoneman realigned the Federal cavalry corps in an extensive system of pickets and cavalry vedettes. The picket lines completely surrounded the Army of the Potomac located at Falmouth, Virginia. The First Division, commanded by General Pleasonton, was assigned responsibility of covering the right flank, and Pleasonton established his headquarters at Aquia Creek, Virginia.<sup>19</sup> General Averell and the Second Division were directed to protect the Federal center positions and he located his headquarters near Brooke's Station, Virginia.<sup>20</sup> General Gregg with the Third Division set up camp near Belle Plain and assumed responsibility for protection of the

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 696.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

Federal left flank.<sup>21</sup>

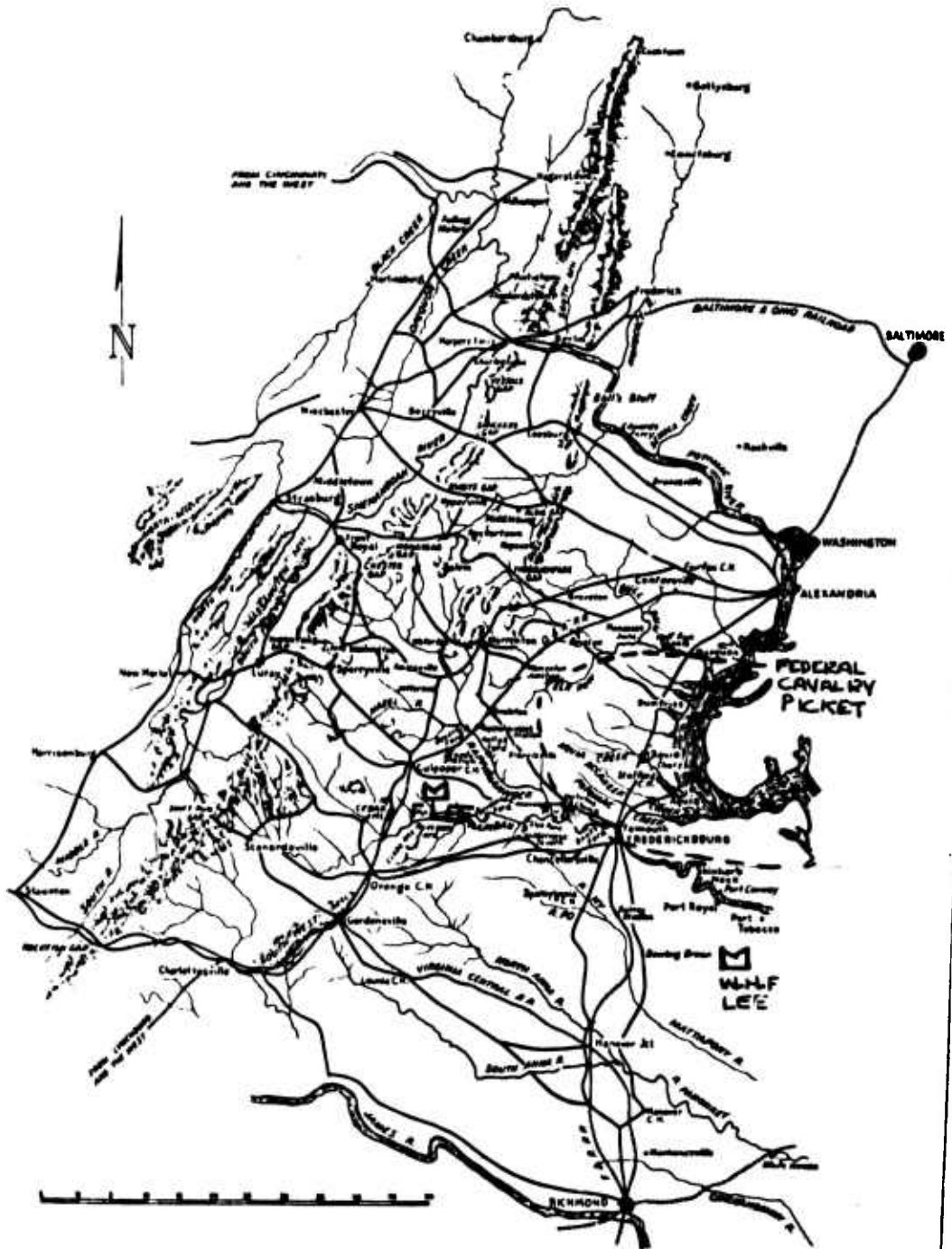
On 15 February 1863, Stoneman issued Cavalry Corps General Order No. 5 which further clarified the area of responsibility of each division and provided additional guidance for establishing the Federal picket line.<sup>22</sup> Under the provisions of General Order No. 5, the First Division was assigned the area south of the Occoquan River, north of Dumfries, Virginia, to the area bounded by the south branch of Aquia Creek. The Second Division was directed to connect its pickets with the First Division south of Aquia Creek and assume responsibility for the area from Aquia Creek to the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. The Reserve Brigade was to connect with the Second Division and cover the Rappahannock River from the railroad to Carlin's Creek. At Carlin's Creek the Third Division assumed responsibility for the area extending east to the Potomac River. The Federal cavalry was thus posted to an immobile and extended picket line during the preparation period for the Chancellorsville Campaign. Map 12 provides visual reference of the vast area covered by the Federal cavalry pickets.

In choosing to deploy the cavalry forces in a system of static pickets and vedettes flung over a huge area, the Federal commanders presented the first of two major contrasts in their method of cavalry employment. While the Federal cavalry was virtually immobilized by its assignment to picket duty, Confederate cavalry was kept in mass and did not lose their mobility on static defensive positions. The two brigades remaining with Stuart and the Army of Northern Virginia were assigned security and reconnaissance missions during the preparation period.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 79.



Map 12 Federal Cavalry Pickets, February, 1863

However, they were not spread thin on long picket line positions. Instead, Fitzhugh Lee's brigade was massed on the Confederate left flank near Culpepper, Virginia. W. H. F. Lee's brigade, also in mass, was located near Port Royal, Virginia, on the Confederate right flank.<sup>23</sup> Map 12 also indicates the initial positions of these brigades during the preparation period.

During the preparation period cavalry forces of both sides were assigned to security missions. However, Hooker chose to tie his cavalry to defensive cavalry picket positions, while R. E. Lee kept his cavalry massed on each flank of his army. In this configuration, Federal cavalry was relatively immobile, while Confederate cavalry was free to conduct raids and reconnaissance missions. Stoneman apparently recognized the inherent weakness involved in the manner in which Federal cavalry was deployed. On 23 February 1863, he wrote to General Seth Williams, the Assistant Adjutant General at Hooker's Headquarters. In this correspondence, Stoneman explained that the Confederate army had used infantry forces to man their picket lines and he recommended that Federal cavalry be relieved from the picket line mission.<sup>24</sup> He further pointed out that the picket mission was resulting in exorbitant wear and tear on horses and men and that by using infantry forces on the picket line, cavalry would be available for other missions. The official records do not indicate that Stoneman received a reply to this letter and Federal cavalry dispositions were not changed.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., XXV, pt. 1, p. 795.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., XXV, pt. 2, p. 97.

Throughout the preparation period, all combat in the Northern Virginia theater was conducted between cavalry units or instigated as a result of clashes between cavalry units. Cavalry skirmishes and minor engagements occurred frequently throughout the theater, as listed below:<sup>25</sup>

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
6 February 1863	Dranseville and Millwood, Virginia
9 February 1863	Sommerville, Virginia
10 February 1863	Chantilly, Virginia
13 February 1863	Dranseville, Virginia
19 February 1863	Leesburg, Virginia
24 February 1863	Strasburg, Virginia
25 February 1863	Hartwood Church, Virginia
4 March 1863	Independent Hill, Virginia
9 March 1863	Fairfax Court-House, Virginia
17 March 1863	Herndon and Bealeton, Virginia
17 March 1863	Kelly's Ford, Virginia
8 April 1863	Winchester, Virginia
14-15 April 1863	Rappahannock River Fords

While this list is not complete, it is sufficient to show that cavalry actions occurred with regularity around the perimeters of the armies during the preparation period. The nature of the combat during this period is best illustrated by the cavalry engagements at Hartwood Church on 25 February 1863 and Kelly's Ford on 17 March 1863.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., XXV, pt. 1, p. 10.

The cavalry action at Hartwood Church had little effect on the battles fought nearly two months later at Chancellorsville. However, it is representative of the swirling affairs along the outposts and sheds light upon the state of morale and proficiency of both cavalry forces during the preparation phase.<sup>26</sup> This skirmish was initiated on 23 February 1863 when General R. E. Lee directed General Fitzhugh Lee at Culpepper Court House to cross Federal lines and conduct a reconnaissance to locate the main body of the Army of the Potomac. Fitzhugh Lee carried out his orders and in his after-action report he provided the following information:

. . . I crossed the Rappahannock River at Kelly's Ford on the 24th instant on a reconnaissance, with 400 men of my command, consisting of detachments of the First, Second, and Third Regiments, Virginia Cavalry. . . . On the 25th, I drove in the enemy's pickets near Hartwood Church and attacked his reserve and main body, routed them, and pursued within five miles of Falmouth, to their infantry lines. Killed and wounded many of them. Captured 150 prisoners including five commissioned officers with all their horses, arms, and equipment. I then withdrew my command slowly, retiring by sections. Encamped at Morrisville that night and on the 26th, recrossed the river and returned to camp with my prisoners. . . . My total in killed, wounded, or missing was 14. . . .<sup>27</sup>

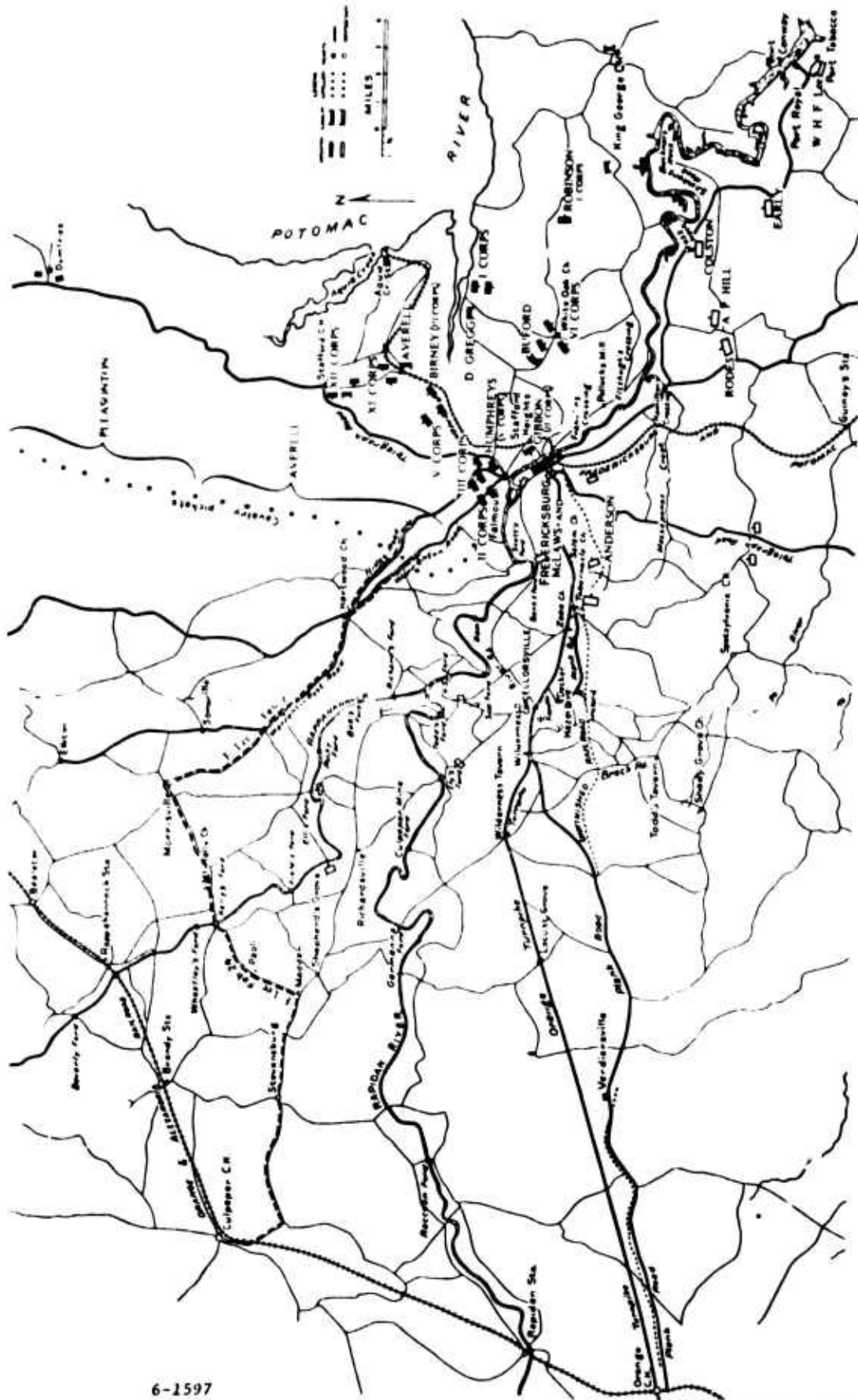
Map 13 indicates the routes used by General Fitzhugh Lee during this engagement.

Fitzhugh Lee's report apparently provides an accurate, if somewhat terse, description of this affair from the Confederate point of view. His report does not mention the fact that his cavalry had to swim across the Rappahannock in truly miserable winter weather. There were fifteen inches of snow on the ground and the weather remained bad throughout

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<sup>26</sup> Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 59.

<sup>27</sup> OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 25.



6-1597

Map 13 Engagement At Hartwood Church 25 February, 1863

Showing the locations of major units of the opposing armies, and the route taken by Fitzhugh Lee in his foray through Hartwood Church. Hood's and Pickett's Divisions of Lee's army are not shown, being in the Suffolk area.

the operation.<sup>28</sup> Nor does Fitzhugh Lee's report mention the ingenuity of his troops in breaching the Federal pickets at Hartwood Church. On this occasion, three Confederate cavalymen, wearing Federal overcoats, approached a Federal vedette. They were not challenged or required to dismount. The Federal vedette was immediately captured without firing a shot and the waiting Confederate column quietly slipped through the Federal lines.<sup>29</sup>

This relatively small and locally confined reconnaissance produced great confusion within the Federal camp. General Fitzhugh Lee was able to create the impression that he was not restricting his operation to the vicinity of Hartwood Church and Federal leaders believed that Lee was moving on Stafford or Dumfries.<sup>30</sup> Reports of Lee's strength were greatly exaggerated as being nearly 1,000 troops.<sup>31</sup> Based on these erroneous estimates, the entire Federal cavalry corps was set in motion to entrap and destroy Fitzhugh Lee's small raiding force. Stoneman's report indicates the less-than-rapid manner in which his corps responded and the confusion which existed among his commanders.<sup>32</sup> As a result of the poor Federal reaction, Lee and his force were able to recross the river and return to their camp on 26 February 1863. The New York Herald reported that General Fitzhugh Lee had been driven from Federal soil and that he had failed to accomplish his mission. This opinion does not appear to be justified, for Lee's objective had been to locate the mass

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<sup>28</sup>Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 61.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>31</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-24.

of the Federal Army and in this he was successful.<sup>33</sup>

The skirmish at Hartwood Church provided several lessons to Federal commanders. First, the system of pickets and cavalry vedettes employed by the Army of the Potomac was shown to be unwieldy and did not provide for the rapid massing of cavalry to parry an enemy thrust. Once again Stoneman corresponded with Hooker's headquarters. In this letter, written on 28 February 1863, he again asked that cavalry forces be reduced on the picket line.<sup>34</sup> The letter also explained that Federal cavalry was covering a picket line almost 100 miles long. Horses continued to receive unnecessary wear and as the affair at Hartwood Church demonstrated, Federal cavalry was difficult to assemble. Stoneman closed by saying that perhaps he should have brought these matters to General Hooker's attention earlier, but he did not want to appear as a complainer. This letter produced results, for Stoneman directed that his pickets be readjusted and ordered his cavalry to use more frequent patrols and mounted reconnaissance missions.<sup>35</sup>

The skirmish at Hartwood Church as well as the daring exploits of Captain John Mosby between 25 February 1863 and mid-March 1863 were both embarrassing and frustrating to the Federal high command. On 26 February 1863 as Fitzhugh was returning to his camp, Captain Mosby and 27 partisan irregulars attacked a Federal cavalry outpost near Germantown, Virginia.<sup>36</sup> Mosby's men killed four Federal troops, captured five more, and also took 39 horses. Mosby's force suffered no losses.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 69.

<sup>34</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 2, p. 111.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>36</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 36.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

On 2 March 1863, Mosby surprised the First Vermont Cavalry near Fairfax Court-House and captured two officers, fifteen troops and additional horses.<sup>38</sup> On 9 March 1863, Mosby was back in action and produced a particularly embarrassing situation for the Army of the Potomac. On this occasion, Mosby and 29 partisans slipped into Fairfax, Virginia and captured Brigadier General Henry E. Stoughton, U.S. Volunteers, in his bed. Mosby also captured two captains, 30 troops, with their arms and 58 horses.<sup>39</sup>

This dashing raid by Mosby produced more criticism of Federal cavalry as characterized by an article appearing on 16 March 1863 in the New York Times. This article read in part, ". . . The capture of General Stoughton in his bed by a party of rebel cavalry at Fairfax Court-House is another of those utterly disgraceful incidents with which this war has recently abounded. . . ."<sup>40</sup> In reference also to Mosby's capture of General Stoughton and the horses, President Lincoln is reported to have said, "Well, I am sorry for that, for I can make brigadier generals, but I can't make horses."<sup>41</sup>

The actions of Confederate cavalry, as described above, while not particularly damaging from a military point of view, were nonetheless extremely embarrassing to the Federal command and particularly to the Federal cavalry. Upon his return to Confederate positions following the Hartwood Church affair, Fitzhugh Lee delivered one further humiliation

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., XXV, pt. 2, p. 856.

<sup>40</sup>Bigelow, The Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 82.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

to the Federal cavalry. This insult was in the form of a message left for Brigadier General Averell, which according to Bigelow read as follows, ". . . I wish you would put up your sword, leave my state, and go home. You ride a good horse, I ride a better. Yours can beat mine at running. If you won't go home, return my visit and bring me a sack of coffee. . . ." <sup>42</sup> General Averell did in fact receive this note from his old friend and West Point classmate and he was determined to accept Fitzhugh Lee's invitation as soon as possible. Hooker heard of the note and visited Averell at his headquarters. During this meeting, Averell requested orders from Hooker to cross the Rappahannock and attack and destroy Fitzhugh Lee's brigade. Hooker assured Averell that his request would be granted in the near future.

General Hooker proved true to his word and on 14 March 1863 he ordered Averell to move with 3,000 cavalry and six pieces of horse artillery to attack and rout or destroy Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry brigade near Culpeper, Virginia. <sup>43</sup> Averell began his mission at 8:00 A.M. on 16 March 1863. His force consisted of the First, Second, and Reserve Brigades of the Second Cavalry Division and a six-gun horse artillery battery. His force was provisioned with enough supplies to conduct a four day operation. Throughout the day Averell's command marched toward the Rappahannock River and eventually arrived near Morrisville, Virginia, where they camped for the night. <sup>44</sup> At Morrisville, Averell requested an additional cavalry regiment to provide security against attack by a

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>43</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 47.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

Confederate cavalry force suspected to be near Brentsville, Virginia. This request was denied and Averell detached 900 troops from his force to guard the river fords near Catlett Station, Virginia.<sup>45</sup> The detachment of these troops reduced Averell's strike force by one-third and provided cause for severe criticism from his superiors at the end of the raid.

At 4:00 A.M., 17 March 1863, Averell and his main body of cavalry, now reduced to 2,100 troops, moved from Morrisville to Kelly's Ford.<sup>46</sup> The day produced memorable events for the cavalry forces of both sides, for the ensuing battle fought near Kelly's Ford was the first pure cavalry battle of the Civil War east of the Mississippi in which each side employed forces larger than battalions.<sup>47</sup>

Across the Rappahannock, Fitzhugh Lee, the object and intended victim of Averell's raid, was not surprised by the Federal moves directed at his command. He had been informed by telegram from R. E. Lee's headquarters that a large body of Federal cavalry was moving up the Rappahannock.<sup>48</sup> Fitzhugh Lee's scouts reported that the Federal cavalry had arrived at Morrisville at 6:00 P.M. on 16 March. By 1:00 A.M., 17 March, Lee knew that the Federal force was encamped for the night and he began to strengthen his pickets at Kelly's Ford. At this time Fitzhugh Lee was uncertain which way the Federal cavalry would advance, but he assumed that their mission was to attack his brigade.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 89.

<sup>48</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 60.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

At 8:00 A.M., 17 March, Averell began crossing the Rappahannock with his division at Kelly's Ford. The river approaches at Kelly's Ford are blocked by abatis on both sides of the river and covered by Confederate sharpshooters. The first two Federal attempts to cross at Kelly's Ford were repulsed by the sharpshooters.<sup>50</sup> In view of these failures a subsequent attempt to cross the river was made below Kelly's Ford. This crossing attempt also failed owing to the swift current and steep banks at the selected crossing site.<sup>51</sup>

Eventually, Averell was successful in gaining a foothold on the south bank of the Rappahannock and the battle began to progress in accordance with the phasing shown on Map 14. The battle progressed in three distinct phases. After crossing the river, Averell moved to the vicinity of a stone wall running between Wheatleyville and Brooks Farm. At this location he dismounted a portion of his cavalry and deployed them on foot behind the stone wall. Averell referenced his personal knowledge of Fitzhugh Lee's character and feeling that Lee would charge blindly, he determined that he would meet the expected charge from the protection provided by the stone wall.<sup>52</sup> His assessment of Lee's probable intention proved correct, for at this time Fitzhugh Lee was approaching the Federal positions with five mounted regiments, moving in column formation.

Upon discovering the Federal positions, Lee's leading regiment, the Third Virginia, immediately turned to its left and charged the enemy behind the stone wall.<sup>53</sup> This Confederate charge was repulsed by heavy rifle fire and before the remaining Confederates could conduct

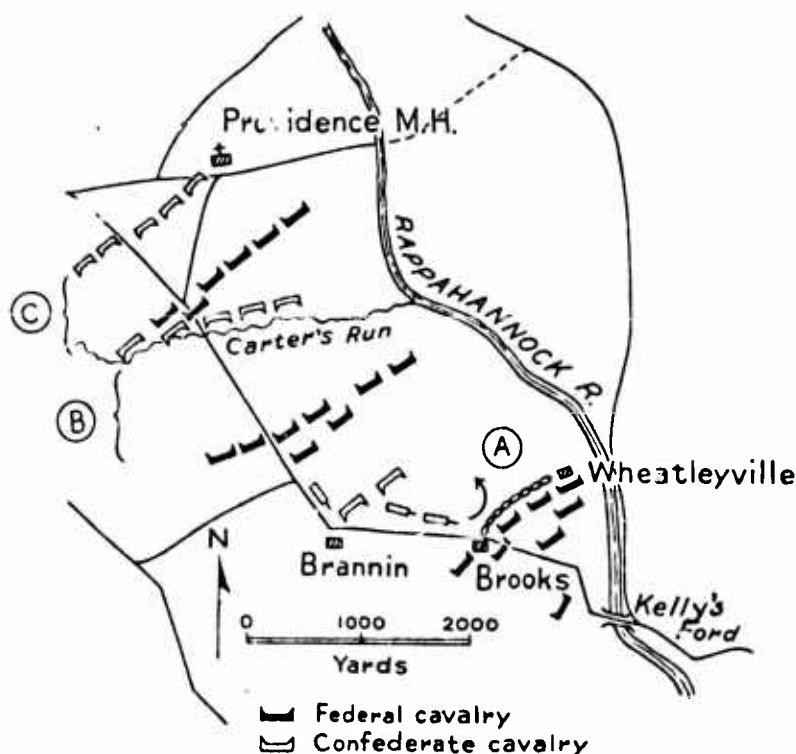
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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 61.



Map 14

ENGAGEMENT AT KELLY'S FORD, MARCH 17, 1863

Phase A (shown on map as A): Averell crossed the Rappahannock at Kelly's Ford and deployed behind the stone wall running between Wheatleyville and Brooks' farm. Meanwhile Fitzhugh Lee with his brigade of five regiments was approaching in column on the road leading southeast toward Brannin. His leading regiment turned off to its left into the field and charged the Federal position; but was repulsed by heavy fire from behind the stone wall. As the other regiments started to deploy, they were charged by the Federal cavalry and withdrew north of Carter's Run.

Phase B (see B on map): During this phase, Averell pulled up facing the Confederates and waited for them to charge him, as they had customarily done. When this charge came, the Federal easily repelled it with their repeating carbines, reinforced by the fire of horse artillery. This fire broke up and badly disorganized the Confederate units, so that they no longer had a large formed body of troops on the field.

Phase C (see C on map): The fragments of Lee's Brigade made their way back to a line running generally southwest from Providence Meeting House. The situation was an invitation for Averell to make a coordinated attack, again disperse the re-forming Confederate squadrons, then pursue the remnants vigorously. Instead, he withdrew, leaving Fitzhugh Lee in possession of the field.

their charge, they were in turn countercharged by the remainder of Averell's force. This Federal unit was the First Brigade commanded by Colonel A. N. Duffie. In this charge, Duffie placed the First Rhode Island regiment in the center, flanked by the Sixth Ohio and the Fourth Pennsylvania on the right and the Fifth U.S. Cavalry on the left. Sensing the precariousness of their positions, the Confederates declined combat and withdrew north to the vicinity of Carter's Run.

As the Confederate cavalry was driven behind Carter's Run, Phase B of the battle commenced. Averell did not allow a vigorous pursuit and instead spent nearly 30 minutes reorganizing his force prior to continuing his advance.<sup>54</sup> During the remainder of Phase B, Averell moved forward and halted facing the Confederates across Carter's Run and here he again awaited an expected Confederate charge. Once again Fitzhugh Lee accommodated Averell's plan. Lee ordered his entire brigade to charge and again the Federal carbines and horse artillery delivered a devastating fire into the ranks of the First, Third, and Fifth Virginia regiments. This fire broke the Confederate charge and badly disorganized the Confederate cavalry units, who again withdrew to the north.

Phase C of the battle commenced as Fitzhugh Lee's fragmented brigade fell back to a line running southwest from Providence Meeting House. The situation at this point was ripe for Averell to make a coordinated attack against the reorganizing Confederates. Such an attack, if vigorously pursued would have provided an excellent chance for Averell to completely destroy his old antagonist. However, the

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

attack did not come. Averell heard railroad cars moving to his west and fearing that it might be Confederate infantry he withdrew, leaving the field to Fitzhugh Lee.

Speaking of his withdrawal, Averell's after-action report contains the following information:

. . . It was 5:30 P.M. and it was necessary to advance my cavalry upon their entrenched positions to make a desperate attack, or withdraw across the river. Either operation would be attended with imminent hazard. My horses were very much exhausted. We had been successful thus far. I deemed it proper to withdraw. . . .<sup>55</sup>

Thus the Federal cavalry had in fact crossed the Rappahannock with a strong force of 2,100 troopers provisioned for four days of fighting. Their orders were to rout or destroy an enemy approximately half their size. They were initially successful, yet, they retreated after having advanced only two and one-half miles. They did not inflict serious damage to their enemy and General Averell had abandoned the field with victory within his reach. Both sides claimed a victory at the battle of Kelly's Ford. The after-action report submitted by Averell claimed a victory and stated, in part, that "The principal result achieved by this expedition has been that our cavalry has been brought to feel their superiority in battle."<sup>56</sup> He further estimated that his expedition probably killed 200 men and as many horses and captured 63 prisoners. He reported his losses as 56 killed or wounded and 22 captured.<sup>57</sup> General Fitzhugh Lee also claimed a victory and estimated that Federal losses had been heavy. He reported capturing 29 prisoners and placed his own losses as 99 men killed or wounded, 34 men captured and 170 horses lost.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

Both sides, with few exceptions, seemed pleased with the results of this engagement. Secretary of War Stanton congratulated Hooker on Averell's success, however, Hooker was less than satisfied with Averell's performance, and he is reported to have said, "He was sent to perform a certain duty and failed to accomplish it from imaginary apprehensions."<sup>59</sup> As regards Averell's performance, Hooker's statement is harsh but factual. Averell failed to destroy his enemy; however, the raid did give Federal cavalry a long sought for morale boost. Federal cavalry had proven to itself that it could successfully engage Confederate cavalry, in Southern territory. Across the river, Fitzhugh Lee must have pondered the disastrous results of his piecemeal attacks against a tougher than normal Federal cavalry.

Thus, the first major cavalry action in northern Virginia produced a euphoric effect on Federal cavalry out of proportion with the tactical results achieved. On the Confederate side of the river, the realization was driven home that Union cavalry was improving and that future encounters between the opposing cavalry forces might no longer produce easy victories for the Confederate cavalry.

Following the battle of Kelly's Ford, the cavalry of both sides continued normal security missions and no major raids or large scale actions occurred until General Hooker set his forces in motion to attack Confederate forces south of the Rappahannock during the campaign of Chancellorsville. The cavalry actions which occurred during February and March must have encouraged Hooker that his cavalry corps could fight effectively on independent missions, for he assigned a very ambitious mission to the cavalry corps for the impending Chancellorsville campaign.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., XXV, pt. 2, p. 1073.

In briefly reviewing Federal plans, it will be recalled from Chapter II, that it was Hooker's intention to dispatch Stoneman's cavalry corps deep in the rear of the Army of Northern Virginia. Hooker envisioned that his cavalry would perform two major functions during his attack on R. E. Lee at Fredericksburg. First, the cavalry corps was to sever General Lee's lines of communication between Fredericksburg and Richmond. Second, the cavalry corps was directed to block Lee's anticipated retreat toward Richmond, and if possible, to force Lee's army toward Gordonsville, Virginia. On 12 April 1863, Stoneman was ordered, in a lengthy letter, to execute this plan with all his corps except one brigade which was to remain with the main body of the Army of the Potomac.<sup>60</sup> It should be recalled that Stoneman was unable to get his corps across the Rappahannock before heavy rains delayed his departure. He therefore, remained with the cavalry corps near Warrenton, Virginia, until 29 April.

On 29 April after revising his initial plans, Hooker ordered his Army to the attack. Stoneman, in coordination with the movements of the Federal Right Wing, crossed the Rappahannock and led the bulk of the Federal cavalry south toward Richmond in an attempt to sever R. E. Lee's lines of communication. During Stoneman's departure, the execution phase of the Chancellorsville Campaign began in earnest and as a result of Hooker's plan, only two major cavalry forces were present on the Chancellorsville battlefields. The Federal cavalry brigade, detached from Stoneman's corps to remain with the army, was commanded by Brigadier General Alfred Pleasonton. His brigade consisted of three regiments, a

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., XXV, pt. 2, p. 1066.

battery of light artillery and totaled not more than 1,500 men.<sup>61</sup> This brigade was the Second Brigade of Pleasonton's First Division and contained the Sixth New York, Eighth and Seventeenth Pennsylvania regiments, and one horse artillery battery. This brigade was opposed by two Confederate brigades at Chancellorsville totalling approximately 2,500 troops.

General Pleasonton and his small brigade led the Federal crossing of the Rappahannock River on 29 April 1863. Pleasonton had been directed to report to Major General Henry W. Slocum, the Federal right wing commander, on 29 April 1863.<sup>62</sup> After reporting to Slocum, Pleasonton attached a cavalry regiment to each Federal corps for the march from the Rappahannock to the Rapidan River. He assigned the Eighth Pennsylvania to the V Corps, the Sixth New York to the XII Corps and the Seventeenth Pennsylvania to the XI Corps. Pleasonton took command of the Sixth New York and the Seventeenth Pennsylvania as they moved from Kelly's Ford to Germanna Ford. Colonel Thomas C. Devin, normally the brigade commander, took charge of the Eighth Pennsylvania with the V Corps from Kelly's Ford to Ely's Ford.<sup>63</sup> Map 2, Chapter II, page 24, details the movement of these corps and their accompanying cavalry regiments.

The XI and XII Army Corps camped at Germanna Ford on the night of 29 April 1863 and the V Corps camped at Ely's Ford. By 11:00 A.M.,

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<sup>61</sup> Alfred Pleasonton, "The Successes and Failures of Chancellorsville," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York: The Century Company, 1884-1888), pt. 1, p. 172.

<sup>62</sup> OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 774.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

30 April, the V Corps reached Chancellorsville, followed shortly thereafter by the XI and XII Corps which arrived by 2:00 P.M. On 30 April the cavalry brigade was reunited and assigned to picket duty on the right and front of the Federal right wing at Chancellorsville.<sup>64</sup>

The move from Kelly's Ford to Chancellorsville had been rapid and virtually unopposed; however, three events occurred during the move which Pleasonton felt were significant. During the move on 29 April 1863, Pleasonton's cavalry surprised and captured a Confederate cavalry picket near Germanna Ford. One of the prisoners was an engineer officer on R. E. Lee's staff, and this officer had in his possession a war diary which he had kept throughout the war.<sup>65</sup> General Pleasonton spent most of the night of 29 April reading the diary. It indicated that during the first week of March 1863 Confederate Generals T. J. Jackson, A. P. Hill, R. S. Ewell, and J. E. B. Stuart had held a war conference at Stuart's headquarters and concluded that the next battle would be fought near Chancellorsville. They recommended, according to the diary, that the ground be prepared for the coming battle near Chancellorsville.

At 1:00 P.M., 30 April, Pleasonton reported that his command captured a courier from R. E. Lee's headquarters. According to Pleasonton, this courier had a dispatch from R. E. Lee addressed to Major General Lafayette McLaws. The dispatch is quoted by Pleasonton as saying that General Lee had just been informed of the enemy build-up at Chancellorsville and inquired why he had not been kept advised.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Pleasonton, Battles and Leaders, III, p. 173.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

Some controversy surrounds this document and it was never found following the battle. Pleasonton states that he gave both documents, the diary and the dispatch, to General Hooker at Chancellorsville at 2:00 P.M., 30 April.<sup>67</sup>

Pleasanton is probably in error on the time as all other sources indicate that Hooker did not arrive at Chancellorsville until after 5:00 P.M., 30 April. Nonetheless, Pleasanton stated that after delivering the documents to Hooker, he recommended that the Federal Right Wing continue the movement toward Fredericksburg. Pleasanton believed that Hooker should have moved the Army out of the wilderness to the more open area just east where maneuver would be easier on the open ground and where Federal artillery would be more effective. Pleasanton was apparently surprised when Hooker did not take his advice and chose to consolidate the Army at Chancellorsville.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to the captured documents, Federal cavalry participated in two skirmishes enroute from Kelly's Ford to Chancellorsville. At 1:00 P.M., 29 April, General J. E. B. Stuart, with elements of Fitzhugh Lee's brigade, attacked the Union XI and XII Corps columns moving from Kelly's Ford toward Germanna Ford. Stuart reported that he pierced the Federal columns and captured prisoners from the V, XI, and XII Corps.<sup>69</sup> Pleasanton reports that this attack, as well as another attack on the XI and XII Corps on 30 April, was brushed aside. He further reported that his cavalry took nearly 300 prisoners during the march from Kelly's Ford to Chancellorsville.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 1045.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 774.

After Hooker's arrival at Chancellorsville, Pleasonton continued to worry about the Federal positions at Chancellorsville. After dark on 30 April, he again called on Hooker at the Chancellors House and recommended that the XI Corps be moved toward Spotsylvania Court House in order to extend the Union battle lines from Chancellorsville to Spotsylvania.<sup>71</sup> Map 2, Chapter II, page 24, shows the location of Spotsylvania Court House. Hooker did not accept this recommendation, whereupon Pleasonton asked for and received permission to send a cavalry regiment on a reconnaissance mission toward Spotsylvania Court House.<sup>72</sup>

Pleasonton then ordered Colonel Duncan McVicar to take the Sixth New York Cavalry and move from Chancellorsville to Spotsylvania, ascertain the enemy situation there, and return before dawn.<sup>73</sup>

Colonel McVicar proceeded to carry out these orders, and the engagement which resulted produced the only pure cavalry clash to occur during the execution phase of the Chancellorsville Campaign. Colonel McVicar and the Sixth New York marched to Spotsylvania Court House. Finding no enemy at that location, they proceeded to return to Chancellorsville. On his return march, he found the road blocked by a body of Confederate cavalry, later identified as the Fifth Virginia regiment. Colonel McVicar charged this force and achieved initial success which resulted in the pursuit of the Fifth Virginia. The pursuit was ended as the Second Virginia regiment attacked Colonel McVicar's column. The resulting action was a confused night melee, during which Colonel McVicar was killed. The Sixth New York was able to break contact and return to

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<sup>71</sup>Pleasonton, Battles and Leaders, III, p. 175.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

Chancellorsville unmolested.<sup>74</sup> During this wild night engagement, at least two cavalry charges occurred and confusion was rampant on both sides; however, it appears that the Federal cavalry, though losing their commander, may have gotten the better of this engagement.

Throughout 1 May until approximately 4:00 P.M. 2 May 1863, Pleasonton's brigade performed security duties to the right front of the Army of the Potomac. During this time they engaged elements of Anderson and McLaw's divisions on the Orange Plank Road and the old Orange Turnpike. On the afternoon of 2 May 1863, Major General David E. Sickles, commanding the III Federal Corps, stated that he could observe Confederate military and wagons moving across his front on the Furnace Road. Sickles believed this movement to be a retreat and so informed Hooker. The movement observed by Sickles was of course not a retreat. Instead, it was the movement of Jackson's Corps as it marched to turn the Federal right flank. Map 6, Chapter II, page 35, provides a review of this movement.

General Hooker had been aware of this Confederate movement since 9:30 A.M., 2 May. At 4:00 P.M. on 2 May, Hooker ordered General Pleasonton and his cavalry brigade to join with General Sickles in the vicinity of Hazel Grove in an attempt to capture Jackson's wagon trains.<sup>75</sup> Pleasonton moved his command from Chancellorsville to Hazel Grove and arrived there shortly before General T. J. Jackson delivered his devastating attack on the Federal right flank.

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 774.

Upon arrival at Hazel Grove, Pleasonton detached the Sixth New York Cavalry to work with Sickles' III Corps. With the remaining regiments of his brigade, including his horse artillery battery, Pleasonton moved to positions in the clearing at Hazel Grove, about two hundred yards from woods which contained the flank of the ill-fated XI Corps.<sup>76</sup> At approximately 5:15 P.M., 2 May, Stonewall Jackson launched his attack which shattered the Federal XI Corps and hurled it back into a headlong retreat upon the Union positions to the east. The situation at this time is shown on Map 8, Chapter II, page 39.

As the Confederate attack began, Pleasonton occupied the heights at Hazel Grove with his artillery and the Eighth and Seventeenth Pennsylvania regiments. Upon hearing the attack to his west and after observing the fleeing remnants of the XI Corps, Pleasonton ordered the Eighth Pennsylvania to charge up the road connecting Hazel Grove with the Orange Turnpike.<sup>77</sup> This charge was conducted in a most gallant manner against overwhelming odds and with little chance of success. The Eighth Pennsylvania collided with elements of Rodes's Confederate division and was shattered by the devastating effect of massed musket fire. This murderous fire killed Major Peter Keenan, Captain Charles Arrow-smith, Adjutant J. Haseltine Haddock and 30 Federal cavalrymen.<sup>78</sup> The remnants of the shattered Eighth Pennsylvania joined the fleeing members of the XI Corps in their retreat to Chancellorsville. Map 8, Chapter II, depicts this retreat.

During the heroic charge of the Eighth Pennsylvania, Pleasonton used his time wisely and with the help of the Seventeenth Pennsylvania,

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<sup>76</sup>Pleasonton, Battles and Leaders, III, p. 179.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

he was able to place 18 additional cannons with his original 6 guns at Hazel Grove.<sup>79</sup> Thus he had amassed a force of 24 guns which he ordered loaded with double charges of cannister. This done, he deployed the Seventeenth Pennsylvania, still mounted, behind the guns. With his small force thus arrayed, Pleasonton awaited the Confederate onslaught.

At dusk, elements of Rodes's division, the right flank of the Confederate attack, appeared before Pleasonton's positions. As they advanced, Pleasonton gave the order to fire and his guns loaded with cannister rocked the Confederate lines with lethal effectiveness.<sup>80</sup> Pleasonton continued to pour a deadly fire on the attacking Confederates and he was able to check their advance and retain control of the key terrain at Hazel Grove.

During the general confusion which occurred on both sides after dark on 2 May, Pleasonton's small force of cavalry and artillery was reinforced by Sickles with two infantry divisions of the III Corps. At 4:00 A.M., 3 May, Pleasonton and the remainder of his Second Brigade were ordered to leave Hazel Grove and move to the vicinity of U.S. Ford on the Rappahannock River.<sup>81</sup>

The removal from Hazel Grove and transfer to security duty at U.S. Ford ended the combat participation of the Federal cavalry on the main battlefield at Chancellorsville. Pleasonton's brigade had performed heroically and the charge of the Eighth Pennsylvania and Pleasonton's actions at Hazel Grove were among the brightest actions of any Federal units. Major Clifford Thomas, aide-de-camp to Pleasonton,

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>81</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 776.

states in a letter published in Battles and Leaders of the Civil War that following the Chancellorsville Campaign, Hooker introduced Pleasonton to President Lincoln and said, "Mr. President, this is General Pleasonton who saved the Army of the Potomac the other night."<sup>82</sup>

Following the move to U.S. Ford, Pleasonton was given command of the Second Cavalry Division which Averell had commanded at the start of Stoneman's Raid. Averell and his division were recalled by Hooker on 2 May from the vicinity of Rapidan Station.<sup>83</sup> Hooker had not been pleased with Averell's performance as a part of Stoneman's Raid, and he relieved Averell on 3 May 1863.<sup>84</sup> Pleasonton subsequently assumed command of Averell's division and in addition he recovered his First Brigade which had also been with Averell. Thus, on 4 May 1863, Pleasonton was in command of nearly two cavalry divisions.<sup>85</sup> On 4 May, he was directed to have his command secure all Rappahannock River Fords. He was able to accomplish this mission, and on 6 May, he returned with the retreating Army of the Potomac to their old camps at Falmouth, Virginia.<sup>86</sup> This retreat ended the activities of Federal cavalry units on the main battlefields at Chancellorsville.

As previously noted, General R. E. Lee initially deployed the two cavalry brigades remaining with the army on each flank of his Army of Northern Virginia. During the preparation phase, he began to contemplate the realignment of his cavalry and on 12 March he informed General

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<sup>82</sup>Pleasonton, Battles and Leaders, III, p. 180.

<sup>83</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 2, p. 356.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 383.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., XXV, pt. 1, p. 776.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

W. H. F. Lee at Port Royal to be ready to move on short notice.<sup>87</sup> Following the engagement at Kelly's Ford, R. E. Lee directed W. H. F. Lee to move with his brigade to the upper Rappahannock area. This move was directed on 4 April.<sup>88</sup> In directing this move, R. E. Lee placed both cavalry brigades available to his army on the left flank and it is indicative of his concern of an attack from the direction of the upper Rappahannock area.

General W. H. F. Lee arrived in the vicinity of Culpepper, Virginia, on 8 April. His arrival insured that both his brigade and Fitzhugh Lee's would be in a position to protect the river fords prior to the time that Stoneman attempted his abortive crossings on 13 April 1863. Even though Stoneman's initial attempts to cross the Rappahannock were unsuccessful, his presence in the upper Rappahannock area created confusion in the Confederate camp. On 14 April 1863, R. E. Lee notified Brigadier General W. E. Jones that he believed that Stoneman's objective was the Shenandoah Valley area.<sup>89</sup> This was an incorrect assumption and indicates that the Federal deception plan concerning Stoneman's movements was initially successful.

By 16 April after Stoneman failed to cross the river, R. E. Lee revised his estimate of Federal intentions. He wrote President Jefferson Davis on 16 April and indicated that Stoneman remained north of the Rappahannock. He further stated that Stuart believed that Stoneman's activity was a feint to cover other operations.<sup>90</sup> Shortly after this letter was sent, Lee met in person with President Davis and pointed out

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., XXV, pt. 2, p. 664.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 721.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 724.

the pressing need to increase the size of the cavalry available to the Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>91</sup> Activities to move more cavalry units to R. E. Lee's theater were begun immediately, however, no cavalry reinforcements reached him, before Hooker commenced his movements on 28 and 29 April.

General Stuart learned that the Federal army was crossing the Rappahannock in strength at 9:00 P.M., 28 April, while he was near Culpepper, Virginia.<sup>92</sup> Stuart immediately ordered W. H. F. Lee to dispatch a cavalry regiment from Brandy Station to attack the Federals at Kelly's Ford. W. H. F. Lee's force engaged the Federal columns but they were not strong enough to stop the advance of the Union right wing. While this initial engagement was in progress, Stuart issued orders to assemble his entire cavalry force at Culpepper and directed that pickets remain in contact with the Federal advance to determine which direction the Union army planned to move.<sup>93</sup>

On 29 April, at 1:00 P.M., Stuart and two brigades of his division attacked and penetrated the Federal columns moving toward Germanna Ford. Stuart reported taking prisoners from the Federal XI, XII, and V Corps and he further stated that this information was immediately telegraphed to General R. E. Lee.<sup>94</sup>

Prior to conducting his attack on the Federal line of march, Stuart ordered Colonel J. Lucius Davis to reinforce and hold the Rapidan River fords at Germanna and Ely. Davis attempted to carry out these

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 738.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., XXV, pt. 1, p. 1045.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 1046

orders; however, his force arrived too late to prevent the Federal XI and XII Corps crossing at Geimanna Ford. Stuart now realized that a large Federal force was between his cavalry division and the Army of Northern Virginia. He understood the precariousness of his position and issued orders to move his division between the advancing Federals and the Confederate positions at Fredericksburg.<sup>95</sup> Accordingly, he dispatched General Fitzhugh Lee's brigade to move across Raccoon Ford to positions on the Federal front between Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg. At approximately the same time, Stuart learned that Stoneman's cavalry corps, which crossed the Rappahannock behind the XI and XII Corps, was moving southward toward Gordonsville. To counter this threat, he dispatched W. H. F. Lee with two cavalry regiments to guard Gordonsville and the Orange and Alexandria Railroad along the upper Rapidan.<sup>96</sup> Map 2, Chapter II, page 24, shows the movement of Stoneman's cavalry and shows W. H. F. Lee's force moving toward Culpepper, while Fitzhugh Lee's brigade was moving toward Fredericksburg from Raccoon Ford.

General Stuart remained with Fitzhugh Lee's brigade in an attempt to get between the Federal advance and Fredericksburg. On 30 April, Stuart, with Fitzhugh Lee's brigade, again attacked the marching columns of the Federal XI and XII Corps near Wilderness Tavern. His attack caused several Federal regiments to deploy but was too weak to delay the strong Federal infantry columns.<sup>97</sup>

On learning that the enemy had already reached Chancellorsville, Stuart changed his course during the late afternoon of 30 April. He

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 1047.

began to move his force toward Spotsylvania Court House and as night fell he left Fitzhugh Lee's brigade near Todd's Tavern and rode with his staff toward Fredericksburg to meet with R. E. Lee.<sup>98</sup> Not more than one mile from Todd's Tavern, Stuart encountered the Sixth New York cavalry returning from its reconnaissance at Spotsylvania Court House. Stuart sent for the Fifth Virginia cavalry, which was attacked by the enemy cavalry column. Stuart's report does not agree with Pleasonton's concerning what followed in this engagement. However, Stuart was present and Pleasonton was not, so Stuart's report may be more valid. As already noted, this engagement was a confused night action and both Federal and Confederate cavalry subsequently moved on to their intended destinations.<sup>99</sup>

On 1 May, Stuart's two brigades remained separated. W. H. F. Lee was in the vicinity of Culpepper and engaged with Averell's Second Cavalry Division. After their hard night march, with little rest for men or horses, Fitzhugh Lee's brigade was assigned the mission of covering the movement of Jackson's corps from Fredericksburg to the Confederate positions near Decker's Crossroads.

Jackson's Corps arrived near Deckers at dark on 1 May and here Stonewall conferred with R. E. Lee concerning Confederate plans for the next day. Stuart, with elements of his cavalry, was sent to scout the roads over which Jackson's Corps could move toward the Federal right flank. Later in the evening, Fitzhugh Lee sent a report which indicated that the Federal right flank was located in the angle formed by the Orange Plank Road and the Brock Road. At approximately the same time, Jackson's chaplain, the Reverend Mr. Lacey, who was familiar with the

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

terrain, told Lee that troops could be marched around the Federal right flank by way of Wilderness Tavern. Based on this information, Lee and Jackson produced the plan to turn the Federal right flank.<sup>100</sup> Lee then directed that Jackson's corps would make the attack and that Stuart and his cavalry would cover the movement.<sup>101</sup>

On 2 May, Fitzhugh Lee's brigade moved with Jackson's corps and was successful in preventing the Federal forces from interfering with the march. This was an important accomplishment when it is recalled that many Federal officers, including Hooker himself, actually saw parts of Jackson's movement at various times during the day.

The movement of Jackson's Corps to its attack positions took longer than expected. At 1:00 P.M. one of Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry detachments was able to see the Union right flank from concealed positions near Burton's Farm. Shortly thereafter, Jackson, accompanied by Fitzhugh Lee, arrived at Burton's Farm. Jackson was delighted at reaching this point undetected. However, his delight quickly changed to disappointment when he discovered that the Orange Plank Road was picketed by Federal troops. To advance down the Orange Plank Road would bring Jackson at an oblique angle into the Federal front instead of their rear and he would also lose the element of surprise.<sup>102</sup> Stonewall therefore changed his plans and directed the head of his column to cross the Orange Plank Road and move to positions near the old Orange Turnpike. There the column was to halt and wait for Jackson's arrival. Map 7, Chapter II, page 38, shows the relative positions of the Orange Plank Road and the

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<sup>100</sup> Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 264.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 264.

Orange Turnpike west of Chancellorsville and also shows the area where Jackson halted his corps and formed for his attack.

After rerouting the movement of his columns, Jackson directed Fitzhugh Lee to remain near Burton's Farm and maneuver his cavalry as if preparing to charge the Federal pickets on the Orange Plank Road. This feint occupied the Union pickets' attention and Jackson's leading division reached the old Orange Turnpike at 3:00 P.M., 2 May. At 4:20 P.M., General Jackson arrived and began to form his divisions for the attack into three lines perpendicular to the Turnpike and extending nearly a mile to each side of the road.<sup>103</sup> Rodes's division formed the first line, Colston's the second line, and A. P. Hill's the third. A portion of the cavalry horse artillery was positioned in the first line and the Second Virginia Cavalry regiment took positions on the left flank to cover the attack. Once the attack was in progress, this regiment was directed to move to seize and hold the road to Ely's Ford to prevent Federal reinforcement or retreat on that road.<sup>104</sup>

At 5:15 P.M., 2 May, Jackson ordered his corps to attack. His assault swept the Federal XI Corps from the field and caused Hooker to further consolidate his forces at Chancellorsville. Following this attack the Federal army never regained the offensive and eventually retreated across the Rappahannock to its old positions at Falmouth. For the remainder of the campaign, until 6 May, Fitzhugh Lee's brigade provided flank security for the Confederate Army at Chancellorsville and continued to hold Ely's Ford Road. W. H. F. Lee remained with his brigade near Culpepper, Virginia, to protect against Stoneman's cavalry which

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 291.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

was now moving northward toward the river fords.<sup>105</sup> Stuart was elevated to command of Jackson's Corps on the night of 2 May, when Stonewall was mortally wounded by his own pickets. Thus, following the attack by Jackson's Corps, Confederate cavalry did not perform any individual actions and remained involved in security operations for their army at Chancellorsville.

While the battle raged at Chancellorsville, the majority of Federal cavalry was participating in Stoneman's Raid and was absent from the battlefields. Though not present on the main battlefields, Stoneman's cavalry and the Stoneman Raid were integral parts of Hooker's overall strategy for the Chancellorsville Campaign. It is then necessary to review this raid as a part of the Chancellorsville Campaign.

General Stoneman received his initial orders for the raid on 12 April 1863. They directed him to march with his entire corps, less one brigade, at 7:00 A.M. on 13 April.<sup>106</sup> Stoneman was told that the purpose of his mission was to turn the Confederate positions on their left flank and to place his command between R. E. Lee's army at Fredericksburg and Richmond, Virginia. Once in position, Stoneman was directed to isolate Lee from his supplies, check his retreat and inflict all possible injury to Lee's army.<sup>107</sup> The remainder of this long order dealt with suggested routes and the enemy Stoneman could expect to meet enroute to his objective. He was told that he was expected to destroy Fitzhugh Lee's brigade near Culpepper and he was informed that a deception plan had been devised to indicate that his objective was the Shenandoah

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<sup>105</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 1., p. 1047.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., p. 1066.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

Valley.<sup>108</sup> The order also emphasized that should R. E. Lee retreat, Stoneman was to keep him from reaching Richmond. The order to Stoneman closed as follows:

. . . The general desires you to understand that he considers the primary object of your movement the cutting of the enemy's connection with Richmond by the Fredericksburg route, checking his retreat over those lines, and he wishes to make everything subservient to that object. He desires that you keep yourself informed of the enemy's whereabouts and attack him wherever you find him. If in your operations an opportunity should present itself for you to detach a force to Charlottesville which is almost unguarded and destroy the depot and supplies said to be there, or along the Aquia Railroad in the direction of Richmond, to destroy bridges, etc., or the crossing of the Pamunkey in the direction of West Point, destroying the ferries, felling trees to prevent or check the crossing, they will all greatly contribute to our complete success. You may rely upon the general being in connection with you before your supplies are exhausted. Let him hear from you as often as is necessary and practicable. . . .<sup>109</sup>

The reader has but to reflect momentarily, to grasp the size, complexity and often contradictory nature of these instructions. The contents of this order will be further explored in Chapter IV, and the remainder of this chapter will examine Stoneman's attempt to execute the order.

Stoneman had less than 24 hours after receipt of this order to prepare his corps for movement. He first selected General Pleasonton and one brigade of the First Division to remain with the army. The remainder of his corps was set in motion on 13 April as ordered, and as noted he was unable to complete crossing the Rappahannock owing to heavy rains and high water. Hooker revised his plans when Stoneman failed to get across the river and directed him to remain at Warrenton Junction, prepared to move on order.

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

On 28 April, Stoneman received additional instructions which modified his original directions as follows:

. . . The instructions communicated for your government on the 12th instant are so far modified as to require you to cross the Rappahannock at such points as you may determine between Kelly's and Rappahannock Fords, and including them, for a portion of your command to move in the direction of Raccoon Ford and Louisa Court-House, while the remainder is engaged in carrying into execution that part of your original instructions which relates to the enemy force and position on the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad and the line itself, the operations of this column to be considered as masking the column which is directed to move by forced march to strike and destroy the line of the Aquia and Richmond Railroad.

You are further directed to determine on some point for the columns to unite and it is recommended that it be on the Pamunkey and near that line, as you will there be in position with your full force to cut off the retreat of the enemy by his shortest line. In all other respects your instructions as before referred to will remain the same. . . .<sup>110</sup>

The essence of the changes were that Stoneman was to split the force initially, with one column to move to Louisa Court House, while the other engaged Confederate cavalry along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad near Culpepper. Stoneman was directed to reunite his command after accomplishing this portion of the mission. Once united he was to execute his original order to sever Lee's lines of communication and block his retreat.

Stoneman and his force of 9,895 cavalry, 22 cannons, and supporting forces crossed the Rappahannock, in conjunction with the crossing of the XI and XII Corps, at 8:00 on 29 April.<sup>111</sup> By 5:00 P.M. his corps was across the river.<sup>112</sup> Stoneman then met with his division and brigade commanders and conducted a map reconnaissance. Averell's Second Division, reinforced by a brigade from the First Division, was

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 1065.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 1058.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

ordered to move toward Culpepper Court House and destroy Confederate cavalry. Initially, Averell was to push toward Brandy Station where Stoneman expected to communicate with him on the night of 29 April 1863. Averell's force consisted of 3,400 men and a six gun battery of horse artillery.<sup>113</sup> The main body with Stoneman consisted of Gregg's Third Division, Buford's reserve brigade, artillery and supporting troops.<sup>114</sup> This force totalled nearly 6,500 troops, supported by 16 artillery pieces.

As Averell's column pushed toward Brandy Station, Stoneman moved toward Raccoon Ford on the Rapidan River. Map 15 provides an overview of Stoneman's movements. He camped near Madden on the night of 29 April. Averell, who was supposed to reach Brandy Station by dark did not reach his objective and instead camped near Kelly's Ford.<sup>115</sup> On 30 April 1863, Stoneman further reduced his main body and sent packmules and all wheeled vehicles back to Germanna Mills. His troops were told to take only what could be carried on their horses.<sup>116</sup> Stoneman reported that this reduction left him with a force of 3,500 in the main body.<sup>117</sup> However, Charles D. Rhodes, in his History of Cavalry of the Potomac states that Stoneman's force consisted of 4,329 troops after the last reduction. The figures are in doubt, but it is most likely that Stoneman had over 4,000 troops with him as they moved southward on 30 April.

While Averell was engaged with elements of the Thirteenth Virginia Cavalry near Brandy Station, Stoneman slipped across the Rapidan River at Raccoon Ford and by 10:00 P.M., 30 April, he cleared the river and moved

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<sup>113</sup>Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 112.

<sup>114</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 1058.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.



Map 15 **STONEMAN'S RAID**

Stoneman's cavalry corps (less Pleasanton and Averell) crossed at Kelly's Ford on April 29 and bivouacked at Madden. On the 30th it camped below Raccoon Ford, then marched south to Orange Springs. On May 1 it continued through Louisa Court House and Yanceyville to Thompson's Crossroads, where the headquarters unit remained during the 2d and 3d. From this point the regiments of Kilpatrick, Wyndham, and Davis, and Gregg's brigade made forays as shown on the map. On the 4th Stoneman marched back through Yanceyville and the vicinity of Louisa Court House to the Orange Springs area. While near Louisa Court House, Buford's brigade rode toward Gordonville then northeast and joined the main body. The remainder of the return trip was made over the same route as followed in going south. Kilpatrick and Davis, after raiding north of Richmond, made their way back to within the Union lines near Yorktown.

southward. At this time, he learned that elements of Stuart's cavalry had crossed the Rapidan above Raccoon Ford and were moving towards Fredericksburg.<sup>118</sup> With Averell occupying W. H. F. Lee's brigade near Culpepper, the route was thus clear of Confederate cavalry as Stoneman moved toward Louisa Court House on 1 May. Gregg's Third Division reached Louisa Court House at 2:00 A.M. on 2 May after riding all day and night on 1 May. Gregg then destroyed the telegraph line and railroad tracks of the Virginia Central Railroad at Louisa Court House. During the day on 1 May, Averell continued his advance toward Rapidan Station and remained in contact with W. H. F. Lee's brigade.<sup>119</sup> Averell was to destroy W. H. F. Lee's brigade then move to rejoin Stoneman; however, Averell did not attack and contented himself, in general, in sparring with elements of Lee's brigade.

By 10:00 A.M. 2 May, the remainder of Stoneman's column reached Louisa Court House. From this location, he sent one column toward Gordonsville where it skirmished with elements of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry. Another column moved toward Yanceyville and yet another small force destroyed the Carr Bridge on the North Anna River.<sup>120</sup> After completing the destruction of Louisa Court House, started by Gregg, Stoneman moved his entire force to Thompson's crossroads. At approximately 10:00 P.M. on 2 May, Stoneman again gathered his principal commanders and issued the following order:

. . . We have dropped on this region of the country like a shell and I intend to burst it in every direction, expecting that each piece or fragment would do as much harm and create nearly as much terror as would result from sending the whole shell, and thus magnify our small force into overwhelming numbers. . . .<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., p. 1060.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid.

In order to implement his plan, Colonel Percy F. Wyndham with 400 men was sent to strike the James River at its juncture with the Rivanna River.<sup>122</sup> Colonel H. J. Kilpatrick and 400 men were directed to destroy the railroad bridge over the Chickahominy River and to operate in the direction of Richmond.<sup>123</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Hasbrouck Davis with 300 men was sent to penetrate the Richmond and Potomac Railroad and if possible the Virginia Central Railroad so as to destroy communications.<sup>124</sup> Gregg, with 700 men, was to destroy the road and railroad bridges on the South Anna River.<sup>125</sup> The reserve brigade and one regiment were to remain at Thompson's Crossroad with Stoneman.<sup>126</sup>

General Stoneman burst his bombshell at approximately 3:00 A.M. on 3 May. He did not at this time know that Hooker had recalled Averell's division and he still expected to be joined by Averell's cavalry. Later on 3 May, Stoneman indicates that he realized that Averell must have been forced back or recalled.<sup>127</sup> Stoneman spent an anxious 2 days on 3 and 4 May awaiting word from his various raiding parties. By dusk on 4 May, General Gregg's force and Colonel Wyndham's force had returned to Thompson's Crossroads. Both reported having accomplished their missions. The parties with Colonel Kilpatrick and Lieutenant Colonel Davis passed by Richmond and continued to move northeast, heading for Federal lines near Gloucester Point.

On 5 May, Stoneman and his command returned to Yanceyville. Six days had passed since he had begun his raid. He now guessed that Averell

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<sup>122</sup>Bigelow, Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 444.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 1060.

had been recalled. He had seen no retreating enemy and had heard rumors of a Federal defeat at Chancellorsville. He feared that with the recall of Averell, W. H. F. Lee and possibly Wade Hampton's brigades would soon close in on his position. For these reasons, he determined to make his way back to the Army of the Potomac.<sup>128</sup>

Stoneman and the remnants of his command retraced his route to Raccoon Ford. He crossed the Rapidan River at daylight on 7 May and moved on to Kelly's Ford arriving there at 9:00 P.M. on 7 May. Here he learned of the defeat inflicted on the Army of the Potomac.<sup>129</sup> On 8 May 1863, Stoneman and his command reached the safety of Federal positions at Falmouth.

Stoneman's Raid was neither a great success nor a total failure for reasons that were beyond his control. The ability of Federal cavalry to penetrate to the very limits of Richmond caused great consternation among Confederate leaders and was an omen of things to come. For a short while Stoneman had in fact severed Lee from Richmond. However, the bridges were quickly repaired and the defeat of his army to the north negated anything that was achieved by his raid. Stoneman's return to camp at Falmouth was the final act of the Chancellorsville Campaign.

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<sup>128</sup>Ibid., p. 1062.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., p. 1063.

## Chapter IV

### ANALYSIS OF THE METHODS USED TO EMPLOY CAVALRY FORCES DURING THE CHANCELLORSVILLE CAMPAIGN

The Chancellorsville Campaign ended on 6 May 1863 when the Army of the Potomac retreated from Chancellorsville to its former camps at Falmouth, Virginia. The battle was costly for both sides. The Army of the Potomac left 17,287 soldiers, either dead, wounded, or missing on the battlefield, or nearly 13 percent of the total Army.<sup>1</sup> The Confederate casualties, percentagewise, were even higher, as 12,821 southern soldiers fell at Chancellorsville, representing 22 percent of the Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>2</sup> In terms of percentage of losses, the South was the loser. Yet, in the end, Southern soil, south of the Rappahannock was still in Lee's possession and his Army of Northern Virginia had won one of its greatest victories.

At the end of the campaign, claiming over 30,000 total casualties, the armies were in exactly the same positions from which they started the campaign. Lee had won a skillfully managed battle and Hooker had lost the battle, letting one opportunity after another slip ineptly away.

With the review of the campaign and its associated cavalry actions now complete, the questions posed in the introduction to this study concerning how Lee won and why Hooker lost can now be answered. In partial

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<sup>1</sup>Bigelow, The Campaign of Chancellorsville, p. 473.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 475.

answer to both questions, the cavalry operations of both armies produced important circumstances which affected the outcome of the battle. The remainder of this chapter is designed to establish a relationship between the cavalry actions and the main battle at Chancellorsville.

In general, it is apparent that General Lee was imbued with the will to win. Throughout the campaign, he took calculated risks, which worked effectively and enabled his army to attack the stronger Federal Army at the critical place and time. Hooker, on the other hand, was over-cautious, lacked aggressiveness, failed to capitalize on his initial successes, and wasted his numerical advantage, which was his greatest asset. In truth, Hooker, as an Army Commander, was simply not in the same class with Lee. During the battle Lee demonstrated his mastery at attaining maximum benefit from all elements of his army. Hooker demonstrated that he did not know how best to employ the various elements of his army to attain maximum benefit.

In this writer's opinion, the blame for the Federal defeat rests with three major decisions made by Hooker at critical times during the campaign. The first of these decisions actually occurred during Federal preparation of plans prior to the battle and involved Hooker's decision to employ his cavalry corps on an independent mission away from army control. The second fatal decision occurred on 30 April when Hooker stopped the virtually unopposed advance of his right wing at Chancellorsville. The final and most damaging decision of all occurred on the evening of 4 May. At this time Hooker made the decision to retreat and leave the field to the Army of Northern Virginia.

The theory involved with these decision deals with the possibility that Hooker's first decision, with regard to cavalry employment,

may have seriously hampered his ability to read the battle. Simply stated, did the absence of Federal cavalry on the main battlefield contribute to Hooker's poor tactical decisions on 30 April and again on 4 May? There is ample reason to believe that Hooker's method of employing his cavalry did effect his ability to provide aggressive leadership at Chancellorsville.

General Hooker's detailed battle plans are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. As indicated therein, Hooker planned to detach his entire cavalry corps, less one brigade, to conduct an independent mission deep behind Confederate lines. The cavalry raid was to occur simultaneously with the attack of his right wing, which was to be his main attack.

In choosing to employ his cavalry in this manner, Hooker's plan was faulty on two counts. First, the single cavalry brigade to be left with the army was too small to provide adequate security and reconnaissance elements for a force as large as the Federal right wing. Second, the mission assigned to the remainder of the cavalry corps was based on faulty assumptions, and even under ideal conditions would have been nearly impossible to execute successfully.

General Stoneman's orders for the cavalry mission have been presented in detail on pages 93 and 94 and they indicate serious miscalculations on Hooker's part. Hooker's orders to Stoneman were based on four assumptions that were critical to the success of the mission. These assumptions were:

1. That Lee would retreat from Fredericksburg if the Federal army was successful in gaining positions on Lee's flank and if Stoneman's cavalry could sever Lee's supply lines.

2. That Stoneman's cavalry could block Lee's Army or move them toward Gordonsville if the retreat occurred.

3. That the Federal Army would be in contact with Stoneman before his supplies were exhausted.

4. That Stoneman and Hooker would be able to communicate while Stoneman was conducting his mission.

In each case these assumptions proved to be invalid. In fact, there was little hard evidence upon which to base the assumptions. Lee's record did not indicate that he was a faint-heart, who would retreat without sufficient cause. The South was defending its native soil and it should have been expected that it would fiercely deny the loss of every inch of ground. What then was Stoneman to do if Hooker could not produce the retreat in the time predicted? Stoneman might have been able to sever Lee's lines of communication for a short time. However, he could not be expected to sit astride these lines, deep in Confederate territory, for any length of time without help from his army.

Even more distressing for Stoneman must have been the problem of what to do if Lee did in fact retreat. In that eventuality it was surely folly to expect that 10,000 tired cavalymen, deep in enemy territory, could impose their will on an army of 61,000. Stoneman could not have blocked Lee's retreat nor could he have forced him toward Gordonsville.

Thus it may be seen that Federal planning for cavalry employment prior to the campaign was spotty at best. It failed to provide sufficient cavalry forces to perform security and reconnaissance duties for the army and instead sent the bulk of the cavalry on a mission based on miscalculations and faulty assumptions. As the battle progressed, the absence of the Federal cavalry on the battlefield became a critical factor in the Federal defeat.

While the planning for Federal cavalry employment was circum-spect at best, the actual execution was even more inept. At the start of the execution phase, Pleasonton's cavalry brigade assigned to the Federal right wing, was split into three regimental-size units and attached to each right wing infantry corps. This parceling out of cavalry assets negated all of the benefits Hooker envisioned when he formed the cavalry into a single corps.

The final Federal organization for combat placed one cavalry regiment with each right wing corps during the movement to Chancellorsville. Sedgwick, commanding the Federal left wing, had no cavalry assets and Stoneman and the cavalry corps were separated from the army and out of communication with Hooker except by courier. In reality the Federal army had less direct and responsive cavalry support at Chancellorsville than in any previous operation.

Even with the bulk of the cavalry unavailable to the army, Hooker could have used Pleasonton's brigade to better advantage. After the Federal right wing arrived at Chancellorsville, the cavalry brigade was reformed and placed inside the infantry lines near the center of the Federal position. At nearly the same time, Hooker made the decision to halt his successful advance after his leading elements encountered light Confederate resistance, on 30 April.

Hooker stated that he ordered the halt in order to consolidate his army's gains and with the idea of enticing Lee into attacking the superior Federal army. It is more likely that he halted, however, simply because he was not sure of the Confederate strength between Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg. He could have clarified this situation rapidly, however, had he used his available cavalry brigade to perform a reconnaissance mission of the Confederate positions. It is hard to imagine

that even a brigade size reconnaissance would have failed to note the hastily prepared Confederate positions and it could have revealed that the majority of the Army of Northern Virginia was still in Fredericksburg. In fact, the four Federal corps were opposed by only one Confederate division. Hooker did not use his cavalry to provide this information, in fact, he gave them no mission at all on 30 April. Nonetheless, for whatever reason, Hooker's halt and cessation of the offensive was disastrous for two reasons. Initially it provided Lee with the time necessary to move his army to Chancellorsville and the decision to halt severely curtailed the chance that Stoneman's cavalry mission would succeed. Stoneman's mission was predicated on Hooker's belief that he could force Lee out of Fredericksburg and link-up with Stoneman within six days. Therefore, when Hooker halted, he delayed his opportunity to force Lee's retreat and increased the time that Stoneman would have to operate without support from the army.

When Hooker assumed defensive positions at Chancellorsville, he had other opportunities to utilize his cavalry to his advantage. Yet once again he failed to grasp the opportunity. The Federal left was securely anchored on the Rappahannock River; however, the Federal right flank was not secured on strong natural terrain. A very obvious and natural mission for Pleasonton's cavalry brigade should have been to provide security for the precarious right flank. This action was not taken and as a result the only Federal cavalry force on the field stood idle within the Federal infantry positions.

The critical day for both armies was 2 May 1863. Jackson's attack on the unprotected Federal right was a successful, though not decisive attack. However, the impact of this attack further clouded

Hooker's judgement and played a decisive role in his subsequent decision to retreat. Hooker's army was, in reality, not seriously damaged by Jackson's attack. In fact, on 3 May reinforcements to the right wing increased Hooker's strength to nearly 86,000 men, who manned prepared positions in the vicinity of Chancellorsville.

Lee, after dealing with Sedgwick's corps at Salem Church, was actually planning to attack Hooker's army at Chancellorsville but Hooker held nearly every advantage. Nothing but Hooker's retreat prevented Lee from launching his attack and it is difficult to believe that Lee could have succeeded. The Confederate soldiers had been marching and fighting for nearly seven days and surely bordered on exhaustion. Hooker's men were comparatively well rested, were occupying strong defensive positions, and possessed a two-to-one numerical advantage. In all likelihood Lee's attack would have resulted in a bloody defeat for Confederate arms. The situation was in fact exactly what Hooker stated he sought, (i.e., to have Lee attack him on the ground of his choice).

Why then did Hooker order the retreat, against the advice of three of his corps commanders? The fact is that Hooker was tactically blind at Chancellorsville. He had detached his cavalry, upon whom he relied for accurate information and had no way to communicate with them or retrieve them. The small amount of cavalry retained was also forgotten and not properly employed. As a result, Lee beat his stronger opponent with a series of dazzling maneuvers which allowed him to bring mass to bear at the critical point and time.

Lee split his small army on three occasions; first from Fredericksburg to Chancellorsville, then again as Jackson was detached to turn the Federal right flank, and finally to deal with Sedgwick at

Salem Church. These were drastic and risky moves, during which the Army of Northern Virginia was extremely vulnerable. Yet, Hooker's army never hampered or seriously threatened to disrupt Lee's maneuvers. Thus, Lee was relatively free to pursue his chosen courses of action, because Hooker, without adequate intelligence, never fully understood what Lee was attempting. In his uncertainty, Hooker was not aggressive and let chance after chance slip away. Hooker was confused and indecisive because he did not receive the intelligence he required in a timely manner. Consequently, his decisions were often based on erroneous assumptions and hope. That Hooker did not receive the information he needed at critical times was owing primarily to the absence of Federal cavalry and Hooker's planning errors were chiefly responsible for its absence.

Had the majority of Federal cavalry been under army control at Chancellorsville, Hooker would surely have been somewhat better informed and might have reacted more aggressively with better intelligence. At the least, Lee's tasks would have been infinitely more difficult and perhaps impossible to accomplish. Stoneman's force of 10,000 cavalry would have been more than adequate to secure the critical Federal right flank, thereby preventing the surprise which Jackson delivered on 2 May. Aggressive patrolling toward Fredericksburg by brigade size cavalry units would have made it difficult for Lee to maneuver his army to Chancellorsville. After Hooker viewed Confederate movement across his front on 2 May, the commitment of a corps sized cavalry raid against Jackson's marching columns could have been disastrous for the Confederate cause. Such an action would surely have revealed the true strength of Lee's weak center position opposite Hooker at Chancellorsville. Had he been so informed and so inclined Hooker could have attacked Lee's center with

three infantry corps and Jackson's marching column with two infantry and one cavalry corps. Each attacking Federal force would have been superior in every respect to their Confederate counterparts and Hooker could have defeated Lee's forces piecemeal.

Even with Stoneman gone, Hooker had other chances to utilize his cavalry to prevent the disaster on 2 May. Hooker was displeased with Averell's actions near Rapidan Station. Consequently, Averell's division, which was part of Stoneman's force, was recalled at 6:30 P.M. on 1 May and directed to move immediately to United States Ford.<sup>3</sup> The order was poorly worded and stated that, "If this order finds you in that place (Rapidan Station) you will immediately return to United States Ford." The order did not address what Averell was to do if he was not at Rapidan Station. Nonetheless, Averell complied and did in fact return to the United States Ford on 2 May 1863.

This order illustrates that Hooker was not aware of the danger to his right flank on 1 May. If he had been thinking more clearly, he surely would have directed Averell to return by way of Germanna Ford and to take up positions on the Federal right flank. Had Hooker chosen this more logical course of action, Averell's reinforced division could have been in position to spoil Jackson's attack on 2 May 1863.

These few examples of what might have been are ample to demonstrate that among other weaknesses, Hooker had no appreciation of the capabilities and limitations of his cavalry. His planning and direction of cavalry activities throughout the campaign were weak and unrealistic.

However, Hooker should not bear the entire burden for the failure of Federal cavalry to achieve meaningful results at Chancellorsville.

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<sup>3</sup>OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 1080.

Several of the cavalry commanders themselves must assume some of the blame. Stoneman, in particular, should have recognized the dangers and weaknesses in Hooker's cavalry plans and advised him of more logical methods of employment. There is no record to indicate that Stoneman felt his mission was inappropriate or that he recommended more appropriate methods to employ the cavalry corps. In this regard, an experienced cavalry commander such as Stoneman should have seen the obvious pitfalls. That he did not is an indication that he failed Hooker in his role as a cavalry advisor.

Stoneman may also be criticized for the manner in which he executed his orders. It was Hooker's intention that Stoneman move his entire force onto Lee's lines of communication and to sever them and keep them closed. Yet, Stoneman detached nearly one-third of his assets to Averell and did not issue orders to Averell to rejoin the main body at a specific time and place. Consequently, Averell, a particularly lackluster commander, dallied with W. H. F. Lee to no avail and was eventually recalled to the army at Chancellorsville by Hooker. Thus, Stoneman lost the services of 3,500 of his cavalry.

Stoneman further violated his orders in the employment of his "bursting-bomb theory." Instead of placing nearly 10,000 cavalry astride Lee's lines of communication, Stoneman launched his attacks with small parties, none larger than 700 cavalymen. These many smaller raiding parties were not able to destroy targets even lightly defended by Confederate forces. In reducing his strength to component parts, Stoneman reduced the amount of damage that his total force in mass could have inflicted. He was never able to completely and effectively sever Lee's supply lines and as a result, his mission, which tied up nearly all

Federal cavalry assets, had virtually no impact on the Chancellorsville Campaign.

In spite of the infeasibility of the mission, Stoneman could have achieved significant results by more aggressive action on his part and by carrying out the intent of his orders. He lost a tremendous opportunity on the night of 29 April. General Stuart with the entire Confederate cavalry division was in Culpepper, Virginia, when Stoneman started his movement across the Rappahannock. Stoneman's initial move to Raccoon Ford, in fact, completely separated the Confederate cavalry from its army. This fact was generally known to Stoneman at the time, though there is no evidence that he knew Stuart was present with his cavalry. At any rate, Stoneman was aware that there was a considerable cavalry force to his north, for he detached Averell's division to screen the main body's move southward.

Stoneman should have realized the significance of the moment, for if he had prevented Stuart and the Confederate cavalry from rejoining Lee and the army, he would have rendered valuable service to his army. However, due to Averell's incompetence and his own desire to move south, the chance was lost and Stuart was able to slip away to rejoin Lee at Chancellorsville. Little if any imagination is required to understand how difficult Lee's tasks would have been without the services of Stuart and his cavalry.

From the preceding discussion it is apparent that Federal cavalry was poorly utilized by Hooker during the Chancellorsville Campaign and that the performances of Averell, in particular, and Stoneman, in general, were not particularly impressive. In reality, a force of 10,000 cavalymen was virtually wasted. They could have been

put to much better use. It is therefore not unrealistic to believe that had it been properly employed and aggressively led, Federal cavalry might have been a much more significant force during the battle.

Such was not the fate of the Confederate cavalry. Throughout the campaign, Confederate cavalry was properly employed, adequately led, and achieved significant results. Little if any fault can be found with the methods R. E. Lee devised to employ his cavalry, or with Confederate cavalry leadership. If any fault can be found with the Confederate cavalry leaders, it lies in their almost total disdain for the abilities of Federal cavalry. This attitude led at times to recklessness and over-zealousness on the part of Confederate cavalry. During the battle at Kelly's Ford, Stuart and Fitzhugh Lee very nearly lost a brigade due to rash charges against a superior enemy. Later, during the main battle, Stuart nearly allowed himself and the cavalry division to be separated from the army. However, in both cases the Confederates prevailed because the Federal cavalry failed to recognize and press its advantages.

During the execution phase, Lee's use of cavalry was exemplary and his cavalry commanders responded with competent leadership, initiative, and efficient operation. When Hooker commenced his movements, Lee had the Confederate cavalry in the right place at the right time. He was able to track Federal movements from the time they crossed the Rappahannock, until the time they began to consolidate at Chancellorsville. There was some initial confusion in getting information from Stuart to R. E. Lee. However, in general, Lee received the information he needed to formulate his plans by 30 April. The large majority of this intelligence was provided by his cavalry force.

Once Lee's plans were formulated, he used the cavalry to reconnoiter for the maneuvering elements of his army and to provide security during troop movements. As noted, Lee's maneuvers were truly desperate gambles, fraught with danger to his army. They were extremely vulnerable during the numerous footmarches through the forests near Chancellorsville. That Confederate cavalry was successful in providing security is evident from the fact that no Confederate unit was successfully attacked while on the move. That Lee enjoyed this high degree of freedom of movement is due to the proficiency of his own cavalry and to the absence of Federal cavalry.

Confederate cavalry played a vital role in Lee's successful surprise attack of the Federal right flank. It was the cavalry which discovered the unprotected right flank and which found the routes utilized during Jackson's march. During the actual movement, cavalry forces provided the security screen and fought successful rear guard actions when Federal infantry attack the rear of the column. In almost every case Confederate cavalry was employed in exactly the manner required and in every case it carried out its mission with great elan and efficiency. In so doing, Confederate cavalry made numerous contributions to Lee's success at Chancellorsville.

General Lee's decision to utilize his cavalry in the manner described was not arrived at as simply as it may appear. By 30 April, Lee was aware that Stoneman had moved to the south with a large cavalry force. It may have been very tempting for Lee to dispatch Stuart in pursuit of Stoneman. However, he must have realized that to do so would have left him as blind on the main battlefield as Hooker was to become in Stoneman's absence.

History does not record Lee's rationale on this question, but it is probable that he must have realized that if he could stop Hooker at Chancellorsville, then Stoneman's raid would become little more than a nuisance. Lee might also have theorized that reinforcements in the form of Wade Hampton's Brigade, Longstreet's Corps, and the garrison at Richmond could be used to deal with Stoneman if necessary. He must have realized that his cavalry assets were not sufficient in strength to pursue Stoneman and simultaneously deal with Hooker at Chancellorsville and Sedgwick at Fredericksburg. Nonetheless, by whatever rationale he employed, Lee clearly arrived at the correct conclusions and the cavalry remained at Chancellorsville where it played a major role in Lee's victory.

Chancellorsville provides an interesting example of a rapidly changing tactical situation. Hooker with the superior army was initially the attacker and Lee the defender. However, Hooker halted his army during a successful advance and consolidated his army, thus inviting a Confederate attack. At the point at which Hooker terminated his offensive, his cavalry had already been irretrievably dispatched toward Richmond. At this point, Lee began to maneuver for his attack and the initiative for battle swung to the Confederates. Hooker was at this point in grave danger; however, he failed to read the signs. Without cavalry, Hooker had no effective method to gather the intelligence required to resume the offensive or as it turned out to provide defense against Lee's subsequent attacks.

## Chapter V

### CONCLUSIONS

The Chancellorsville Campaign, its related cavalry actions and their impact on the overall campaign, have been summarized in detail in the preceding four chapters. The purpose of the study was to determine what, if any, effect cavalry operations had on the Chancellorsville Campaign. The remaining pages of the study contain conclusions concerning the effect of cavalry operations on the battle, a review of lessons learned and personal thoughts on the future use of cavalry or cavalry-type mobile forces.

The first conclusion drawn from the study is that Federal cavalry operations produced no beneficial results for the Army of the Potomac. Indeed, the manner in which they were employed adversely effected the operations of the army at Chancellorsville. The Federal cavalry, in itself, was not to blame for the failure, for it was adequately equipped and fought well on those few occasions when it was properly employed and led. The failure of Federal cavalry to achieve significant results must be placed on General Hooker and the manner in which he employed the cavalry and to a lack of aggressive leadership on the part of several Federal cavalry commanders.

General Hooker demonstrated soon after his appointment to army command that he possessed little appreciation of the unique capabilities of his cavalry. His lack of understanding of basic cavalry principles

is evident during most of the campaign. In fact, Hooker's decision to consolidate his cavalry at army level was the last sound decision he made with regard to his cavalry throughout the campaign. All future decisions made by Hooker with regard to cavalry employment negated any benefit Hooker hoped to achieve in placing his cavalry under a single commander at the army level.

Based on the information presented in the study it is concluded that General Hooker's direction and employment of Federal cavalry contributed to his defeat at Chancellorsville. He had numerous options at his disposal, however, he invariably chose the least desirable course of action. His decisions concerning cavalry employment effectively ensured that he would not be able to call upon the service of his cavalry at the times when they were needed most.

In the final analysis of Federal cavalry operations, Hooker lost sight of or perhaps never understood that the primary mission of his cavalry was to provide reconnaissance and security for his army. This basic error in perception led to the mistakes in cavalry employment and to the subsequent result that Federal cavalry actions failed to benefit the Army of the Potomac during the Chancellorsville Campaign.

The second conclusion drawn from the study is that Confederate cavalry operations produced numerous benefits for the Army of Northern Virginia. As such, these benefits contributed directly to the success which Lee achieved at Chancellorsville. Almost from the beginning, Lee was able to correctly read the unfolding battle. Lee alone among the senior Confederate leaders believed that the main Federal attack would come from the direction of Chancellorsville. Confident in these beliefs, Lee wasted little time in moving his entire cavalry division toward the

area he considered to be the main avenue of approach into his positions. When the attack came, as Lee had anticipated, his cavalry was able to provide the intelligence Lee required to make his plans and they were in position to screen the various movements of elements of Lee's army.

To General Lee, the cavalry brigades were his tactical eyes and ears. Throughout the campaign, he never lost sight of the cavalry's reconnaissance and security missions. Unlike Hooker, Lee did not waste his cavalry units' capabilities on secondary or less important missions. As a result, his cavalry was always available where and when he needed it. Lee thus demonstrated a sound knowledge of cavalry tactics and employed his cavalry assets correctly throughout the campaign. As a result, Confederate cavalry provided Lee with critical intelligence throughout the battle. Cavalry units detected the critical Federal weakness on the right flank and provided the security necessary to move Confederate forces to the critical point. The success of these Confederate cavalry operations in support of the Army of Northern Virginia contributed significantly to Lee's success at Chancellorsville.

In analyzing the success and failure of cavalry operations at Chancellorsville, several lessons are apparent which may be helpful to the modern commander on a future battlefield. Modern cavalry doctrine reaffirms that the primary mission of cavalry forces is to provide reconnaissance and security for the unit to which assigned and to engage in offensive and defensive actions during economy of force operations.<sup>1</sup>

Essentially this mission has not changed since the time of the Chancellorsville Campaign; however, technology has produced drastic

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Army, FM 17-36, Armored Cavalry, June 1973, pp. 1-3, 1-4.

changes in the basic tools of the cavalry. The tank, the armored personnel carrier, and the helicopter have replaced the horse and increased mobility. Modern weapons ensure that the modern battlefield is infinitely more lethal. Technology has also produced various audio and visual devices to increase the range of the cavalry's surveillance capability and modern radios have increased the range and speed of communications. Yet, in spite of technological improvements, the cavalry functions of reconnaissance and security remain essentially unchanged. Reconnaissance is still directed toward gathering information on enemy movement, strengths, dispositions, defenses, and terrain. Security operations are still designed to disrupt the enemy's reconnaissance efforts and to ensuring our own safety and freedom of movement. In spite of the remarkable technological improvements there still exist the requirement for the cavalryman on the ground or in the air. It is the cavalryman's judgment and on-the-spot analysis of information which provides the commander with his most valuable and often most accurate and timely source of information. Therefore the lessons of Chancellorsville have importance for today's commanders and cavalrymen.

The Chancellorsville Campaign provides several interesting lessons. First, the campaign illustrates the absolute requirement for adequate and timely intelligence and cavalry's role in providing timely and detailed information. At Chancellorsville, Lee satisfied his intelligence requirements primarily by proper utilization of his cavalry, and he was victorious. Hooker was unable to satisfy his intelligence requirements because he did not employ his cavalry properly and he lost the battle. Thus, the Chancellorsville Campaign illustrates that in order for cavalry to successfully achieve its mission, it must be immediately

responsive to the requirements of the force it is supporting.

With regard to cavalry employment, Chancellorsville illustrates that there is a definite requirement to ensure reliable and instantaneous means of communication between the cavalry commander and his commander. This is particularly true on the modern battlefield, where cavalry in all probability will be widely separated from its supported unit. In this respect, cavalry should not be employed further from its supported unit than the effective range of the communication means available. If cavalry cannot communicate with the commander in a rapid and reliable manner, then it cannot accomplish its reconnaissance functions, because the information it obtains cannot be provided to the commander.

Confederate cavalry operations at Chancellorsville provided an excellent model of appropriate cavalry operations in the offensive. As an army prepares to commence offensive operations, cavalry is best employed to maintain contact with a retreating enemy or to locate weak areas in an enemy's defense. In the attack, cavalry should be used in a security role to ensure the freedom of maneuver to rapidly mass sufficient combat power at the decisive point of weakness.

The operations of the Army of the Potomac provide striking examples of the fate which can befall an army in a defensive posture with no capability to secure its flanks or to provide adequate early warning of an impending attack. Federal operations illustrate, by negative examples, that in the defense cavalry should be utilized to disrupt enemy reconnaissance efforts, to screen and protect weaker areas of the defensive area and to gather timely and if possible long range information on enemy movements, intentions and order of battle. Cavalry may also be properly employed as a covering force to deceive the enemy

as to the location of the main defenses, to disrupt or slow the enemy's advance and attrite the enemy as much as possible without becoming decisively engaged.

These lessons, particularly those that deal with the defense, are emphatically applicable to today's challenges. In the new defensive concepts emerging today, it appears that the cavalry will almost always be utilized in covering force operations. The cavalry is in fact ideally suited by virtue of its mobility, firepower and training to participate in such operations. However, there is also an inherent danger in utilizing cavalry in this manner owing to the probable nature of a future war.

In any future conflict, U.S. forces will most likely be in a defensive posture at the start of the conflict and can expect to be vastly outnumbered and probably out-gunned by the attacker. In this scenario, the success of the defense will be determined by the commanders ability to accurately read the battle and to rapidly mass combat power at the critical point and defeat the enemy main attack by counter-offensive maneuver.

Such a scenario is identical to the very real situation which confronted General Lee at Chancellorsville. Lee was successful in his defense, partially because of Hooker's mistakes and partially because he did in fact successfully switch from a defensive posture to the offense and brought sufficient combat power to bear at the critical point. As noted in Chapter IV, Lee's cavalry played a major role in his success and it is doubtful that he could have achieved his victory without the information and security provided by the cavalry.

On tomorrow's battlefield great care must be taken to ensure that cavalry units will be available to the commander when his need for accurate information is greatest. All effort should be made to ensure that cavalry units, employed as covering forces far in front of the main battle area, are not destroyed or by-passed during the initial phases of the conflict. It is true that cavalry units are well equipped to function and survive in such an environment. It is also true that their combat power can be effectively used to attain maximum attrition of the enemy forward of the main battle positions.

However, before automatically assigning cavalry units to widely separated and thinly spread covering forces the commander must consider three points. He should first consider where he intends to fight his main battle and where he must stop the enemy's advance in order to accomplish his mission. Next the commander should consider, within the parameters of the first decision, where his cavalry will be most needed and where it can be most effectively utilized. Finally, the commander must consider what alternate methods of providing reconnaissance and security within his main battle positions are available in the event that cavalry forces employed in a distant covering force are destroyed or by-passed. For if this happens the commander's ability to read the battle will be severely curtailed.

Aerial and electronic intelligence gathering devices are not necessarily the answer to the commander's alternative methods of ensuring adequate intelligence. Each of these devices can sometimes be either suppressed or disrupted by enemy action. If this occurs and cavalry-type units are no longer available, the commander possesses no other unit specifically trained and equipped to accomplish the reconnaissance and

surveillance mission. As a result, the commander could easily find himself in the same situation which Hooker experienced at Chancellorsville.

It should be expected that one of the initial objectives of any future enemy will be the early destruction of our reconnaissance and intelligence gathering units and equipment. For this reason then great care should be taken to protect these units from early destruction before they can contribute maximum benefit to the commander at the main defensive position. Cavalry can be at least partially protected from early destruction, by prudent employment techniques. To automatically employ cavalry units in the vanguard of distance covering forces, provides the enemy with an excellent opportunity to destroy them before they can accomplish their mission.

In this writer's opinion, the most critical phase of such a future battle will occur as the enemy approaches to within 10 to 15 kilometers of the main battle position, for it is here that the enemy must begin to convert his actions from general movement to final assault preparations. We cannot and should not expect that a sophisticated enemy will have to reveal the intended location of his main attack at significant distances in front of our main battle positions and we should therefore not expect to be able to gather this information before the enemy commences his final preparations for a deliberate attack.

The new defense doctrine stresses that in order for the defense to be successful the main attack must be identified, contained and defeated. In order to accomplish these tasks, the new doctrine envisions maneuvering units to provide mass combat power and depth at the point of the main attack. It logically follows therefore that cavalry units should be employed at the point where the enemy is most likely to reveal his intentions.

It is during this final critical phase that cavalry can be used to maximum benefit to provide the commander with accurate intelligence and to attrite and channelize the enemy attack into prepared killing zones of the main defense. It is at this point in the battle that the commander will be most dependent on timely and accurate information. As the engagement nears the main battle positions, time to discern the enemy's intention and time to react become the critical factors. It is therefore well to remember that the battle will be won or lost on the main battle positions and while covering force operations are important, they will not in themselves win or lose the battle. It is also important to remember that the primary mission of cavalry is to provide reconnaissance and security for the supported force and to avoid the temptation to utilize it in other roles at the expense of the primary mission.

This is the major lesson to be learned from the Chancellorsville Campaign. Cavalry if properly employed can provide the commander the information and the time to formulate his plans and defeat a superior enemy. On the other hand, as illustrated by the Federal operations, after Hooker stopped his advance, the absence of cavalry units at the critical time and place can very easily lead to a disaster for the defender.

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